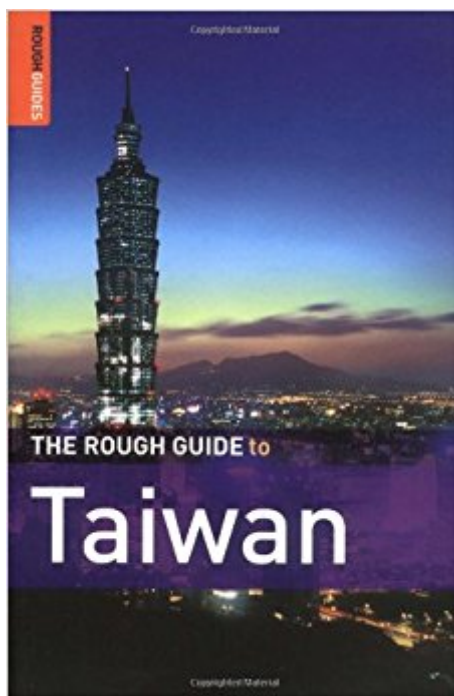


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# The Rough Guide To Taiwan 1 (Rough Guide Travel Guides)



## Synopsis

The Rough guide to Taiwan is your definitive guide to this fascinating island. From the vibrant, frenetic streets of Taipei and teahouses of Taichung to the laid-back, historic Tainan, the full-colour section highlights all the things-not-to-miss. Taiwan's enticing markets and vast range of culinary specialities are covered in full with comprehensive reviews of all the top hotels, restaurants, bars and spas to suit every budget. There is in-depth information on all six National Parks and Taiwan's highest mountains, including Taroko Gorge, the country's most popular natural wonder. The guide also looks at Taiwan's history, culture and indigenous peoples and comes complete with maps and plans for the whole island. The Rough guide to Taiwan is like having a local friend plan your trip!

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The holiday-makers' favourite guidebook series The Sunday Times Travel Magazine --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Stephen Keeling has lived in East Asia for over a decade and is a contributor on The Rough Guide to Spain. Brice Minnigh lived in Hong Kong for ten years working as a journalist. He has written for ActionAsia magazine and has travelled all over the region.

Rough Guide and Lonely Planet are the two guidebook series of choice for independent travelers,

though where I've compared both I've consistently preferred RG for its greater depth and better writing. The LP Taiwan is okay, but this first edition of RG is clearly better in most ways. First, it's a lot more current, published in April 2007, compared to the LP, the most recent edition of which was published in November 2004. Even in a reasonably developed place like Taiwan, things change quickly enough that a three-year guidebook is often out of date, although LP is coming out with its next edition later this year. Perhaps more importantly, the RG is substantially more detailed. The page count alone gives an indication: about 580 pages for the RG, 367 for the LP. Add to that the LP's finer print (still readable though), and you're looking at quite a bit more text for any given attraction, and quite a few that the LP does not cover at all. Quantity isn't everything of course, and the RG -- like others in the series -- is much better written than the LP. The tone is sober, without the element of camp that sometimes creeps into the LP. The RG is also better laid out, with accommodation information immediately following the introduction rather than coming at the end of the section on any given location, as LP has it. The "Highlights" section is both more extensive and better chosen than in the LP. The LP does feature quite a bit more full-color photography, but there are better books for that. Overall, a pretty clear first choice for a guidebook on Taiwan, and likely to remain so even when the next edition of the LP comes out.

I bought this guide for a trip to the Republic of China I made last year -not solo, but I'll keep this review a 1st person's perspective. I like to have a second opinion on my travels so I also took *Taipei In A Day Includes: Taiwan From A To Z, First Edition* along with it. Normally I'd get the LP but I had 2 reasons for not doing so: the negative reviews and the LP travel pack syndrome (which I paraphrase as the syndrome of the 1st time visitor to a popular destination for which there seems to be only 1 guidebook available). So armed with these 2 guides and as much information I could muster from the internet I set off on a journey ... The RG to Taiwan is divided in: \* Colour section: Including 30 places not to be missed (there're more colour photos inside the guide proper). \* Basics: Travel preparations, health matters, culture, safety, holidays, and such. \* Guide: The guide proper, divided in 6 practical geographical sections. \* Contexts: History, religion, social issues, recommended readings, etc. \* Language: Basics of mandarin chinese. \* Travel store: List of RG titles. \* Index. The writing is clear and you get a good idea of what to expect of the places being described; it's a bit too enthusiastic, but not annoying. Every city has a comprehensive list of accommodations, bars and restaurants. I made online reservations in advance (except for the city of Taichung), but I'm glad my favourite place, the Youth Activity Center in Sun Moon Lake, is listed. Eating out in Taiwan seems like a national sport, and I was appreciative of the guiding that listing

gave me, eg. where the Shilin (sp?) night market is (night markets were an interesting experience). It was also nice to have for once a guide where the prices listed matched (or nearly so) the ones I encountered; in some cases even exceeded them (for they're mostly gathered during high season). Almost every accommodation & restaurant is showed on so-so maps, which are the weaker aspect of this guide. There's 2 things I don't like: Lack of coordinates on the bigger maps (especially since numbering doesn't always follows a pattern) and the lack of Chinese characters AT ALL on them. Let me rant on this one: It's humanely impossible to get around the jungle of a big Taiwanese city with a map that's written on a transliteration (the process of obliterating Chinese into Wade-Giles blabber) that no citizen barely understands. Taiwan has been in the process of adopting pinyin (the system used in mainland China) and it makes sense, now more than ever, to have the addresses written on traditional Chinese, since it's the only consistent writing you'll find in the island. On the plus side, pinyin & traditional Chinese are used extensively when a place is introduced, listing things like information, sights, and accommodation. Another thing to consider is that there aren't day itineraries included in the book. I don't lament their absence, except for the idea they give onto what can be done on a balanced planning. The other book I carried, Taipei in a day, has them, but the author failed to research that they're actually doable, so I didn't get any idea from it either. Quite useful were, on the other hand, the advice, tidbits and insight into Taiwanese culture & everyday life, which, on lesser cases, might prevent you from revealing yourself as "too" tourist, or, on a much grander scale, help you land an important business accord (no, I didn't get that, I'm just speculating). So, should you get this guide? Since I don't know you I can't tell (I'll happily answer questions you have about it, though), but if you do so, I'd recommed you ask the friendly staff of a tourist office a map of the places you're planning to visit (or if you're fluent enough, one from a stationery store).

I bought this book while researching for a trip we're planning to Taiwan later in the year. I checked out 4 or 5 different guides from the library and after reading through them all I bought this one because I felt I would like to take it with me. It's better organized than the Lonely Planet Taiwan guide, but written with the same general target audience in mind -- the independent traveler. I enjoy doing the research, and would rather get lost and find something really neat than be on a packaged tour. I was in Taiwan several years ago and this book has been helpful for me to reacquaint myself about Taipei and Taiwan -- and see how much things have changed! The book has mini glossaries in each section that gives the Chinese characters and pinyin pronunciations for places and points of interest described in that section. This is very useful, but might be more useful if they were listed in

the text where these places are described rather than being listed separately. Oh, and if you're concerned about weight, at 500g (17.6 oz) this book has the lightest weight per page count (584 pgs) of all the Taiwan books I've read! The Lonely Planet Taiwan guide weighs less (360g, 12.7 oz), but also has over 100 fewer pages than this book. I'll update this review after the trip to report on its accuracy and usefulness "in the field" but so far I find it pleasant to read and easy to find things.

The Rough Guide to Taiwan had many good suggestions in it for Taipei and a lot of spots that local friends recommended to us were covered in the book. However it doesn't have one good comprehensive taipei city map in it which made it harder to use on the go. The chapter on taipei is really organized topically (teahouses, restaurants, night markets, temples etc.), not geographically, so it took us a while to get an idea of what sights, restaurants, activities were in which part of the city and we ended up criss-crossing the city a little more than I'd like to. All in all it was helpful but I wished I had spent more time beforehand delineating things that we definitely wanted to see and other sites nearby (for example the shilin night market and the national palace museum).

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