

Taiwan (Republic of China) (臺灣)



The official name of Taiwan is the Republic of China although it has had various names, including Formosa. Taiwan views itself as the legitimate government for all of China. Neither Taiwan or the People's Republic of China, which is the formal name for Mainland China, recognize each other politically. However, the two nations have strong economic ties, leading to de facto recognition. Due to its complicated relationship with Mainland China, Taiwan also has a complicated relationship with international bodies. Despite this, Taiwan has maintained relations with many countries.

RELIGION

Taiwan is diverse in its religious beliefs and practices. According to the Department of Civil Affairs, in 2005 35.1% of the population identified as Buddhist while 33% identified themselves as Taoist. There are also a number of traditional East Asian, folk, and Western religions. Before the arrival of Dutch Protestant missionaries in the early 17th-century, native Taiwanese practiced nature worship. Spanish missionaries later brought Catholicism while the Japanese brought Shintoism. Buddhism and Taoism emerged as more Chinese migrants settled on Taiwan.

ETHNICITY

98% of Taiwan is ethnic Han Chinese. Of this group 86% are descendants of early Han Chinese immigrants while the other 14% are derived from other provinces in China and are mostly from post-1945 migration. Most of this group came from Fujian in mainland China. The remaining 2% of the population is divided among 14 major Taiwanese aboriginal groups.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS

Traditionally, Taiwanese families consist of a nucleus family and extended family with a structured hierarchical relationship based on Confucianism. The eldest son and his wife are expected to live with and take care of the son's parents and ancestral graves. Major holidays include: New Years Day (January 1st); Chinese New Year's Eve (Last day of the 12th month in the lunar calendar, typically in January or February); Chinese New Year (1st-3rd day of the 1st month in the lunar calendar); 228 Peace Memorial Day (February 28); Combination of Women's Day and Children's Day (April 4); Qingming Festival (falls on either 4/5/6 April); Dragon Boat Festival (5th day of the 5th month in the lunar calendar, typically June); Mid-Autumn Festival (15th day of the 8th month in the lunar calendar, typically September), National Day (October 10th); Sun Yat-sen's Birthday (November 12th); Constitution Day (December 25th).

QUICK FACTS

Population: 23.3 million

Area: Island in East Asia (22,356 sq mi); surrounded by the East China Sea, Philippine Sea, South China Sea, and Taiwan Strait

Capital: Taipei (7 million)

Language: Mandarin Chinese (official), Taiwanese, Hakka dialects

Terrain: Eastern two-thirds mostly rugged mountains; flat to gently rolling plains in west.

EDUCATION

Education in Taiwan is compulsory from primary school through Junior High School (age 14-15) although 95% of students go on to high school or trade school. A twelve-year compulsory education program will take effect in 2014. Public education is provided from pre-school through university. The literacy rate is 96.1% for those aged 15 and older. Taiwan favors rote memorization over developing creativity. Students feel tremendous pressure from society and from their parents to succeed in school and often study long hours. Taiwanese students have frequently placed among the high test scorers in Science and Math. Students are required to attend a military education class and participate in national defense drills.

CONTEMPORARY TAIWAN

The history of modern Taiwan begins in 1949 with the exodus of Nationalist forces from Mainland China. Nationalist forces (Kuomintang), lead by Chiang Kai-shek, fled to Taiwan following their defeat to Mao Ze Dong and the Communist Forces in the Chinese Civil War. However, Taiwan has never recognized that defeat and still claims sovereignty over all of Mainland China. Likewise, Mainland China claims sovereignty over Taiwan. As a result of this tension there have been period hostilities between the two countries. Those tensions often shape the Taiwanese politics with some factions advocating a declaration of independence while others want closer ties to Mainland China. Economically, Taiwan experienced rapid economic growth and industrialization throughout the latter half of the 20th century. This is referred to as the “Taiwan Miracle.” Much of that growth was due to the infrastructure left behind by the Japanese prior to World War II and to the intellectual and business elite that left Mainland China for Taiwan after 1949. During this period of growth the government kept tight control over the economy as well as politics. Chiang Kai-shek and his son led the country in a one-party state from 1949 into the 1980’s. The rise of the Taiwanese economic eventually led to calls for political change. Beginning in the 1980’s Taiwan began to liberalize it’s political system. Multiple political parties were allowed to form. The first direct presidential election was held in 1996. In 2000, Chen Shui-bian from the Democratic Progressive Party was elected as the first non-Kuomintang president. Today Taiwan enjoys a healthy democracy and a vibrant economy. Closer ties to Mainland China have fueled much of the recent growth. Many Taiwanese businessmen own factories within Mainland China. Roughly 10% of the Taiwanese labor force works in Mainland China.



TAIWANESE IN THE USA

Prior to the Nationalist takeover in 1949 immigration to the U.S. from Taiwan had been small. Beginning in the 1950’s the first wave of immigrants from Taiwan began to land in the United States. Most of those immigrating were those who fled Mainland China post-1949. As economic and political conditions in Taiwan improved in the 1980’s immigration began to slow. Today there are almost a million people of Taiwanese decent in the United States.

Created in 1917 the flag of Taiwan has the official flag since 1949. The blue represents nationalism and liberty, white democracy and equality, and red people’s livelihood and fraternity.



NAMES

Names in Taiwan generally follow the same pattern as names in Mainland China. First names, or given names, come second, after someone’s family name. Generally, most Taiwanese people have three syllables in their name, one for their family name, and two in their given name. Traditionally, the first part of someone’s name was determined by what generation they were part of, with siblings and cousins all sharing a name. However, unlike in Mainland China where it has become increasingly less common, Taiwan has continued to use three syllable names.

FAMOUS TAIWANESE

A few famous Koreans include: Ang Lee, Jay Chou, Chiang Kai-shek, Chien-Ming Wang, and Wei-Yin Chen. Some famous Americans of Taiwan heritage include: Jeremy Lin, Jerry Yang, Lucy Liu, Connie Chung, and Elaine Chao.

MANDARIN PHRASES

- Hi Nǐ Hǎo
- Bye Zàijiàn !
- Good morning Zǎoshàng Hǎo
- Yes Shì
- No Bù
- Please/You’re welcome .. Qǐng Nǐ Búkèqǐ
- Thank you Xiè Xiè
- How are you? Nǐ Hǎo Ma?
- What is your name?..... Nǐ Xìng Shénme...
- My name is Wǒ Xìng ...
- Where are you from? Nǐ Shì Cóng Nǎlǐ Lái De?

USEFUL LINKS

- [CIA World Factbook: Taiwan](#)
- [Taiwan Tourism Page](#)
- [Taiwan News Online](#)
- [Taipei Times](#)