



Ni Hao! For all my English-speaking friends that means hello in Mandarin Chinese, the official language of my country, Taiwan. My name is Mei Ling, but you can call me Wendy. In Taiwan, many people have traditional family names, but we often choose English names too when we get older. We are eager to learn more about English-speaking countries, just as I hope you are eager to learn about my country. Maybe you should choose a Taiwanese name that your friends can call you!

Taiwan is a very crowded country. In my hometown, Kaohsiung, streets are congested and people always seem to be trying to get somewhere. I hope you never need to park a car while you are here because it's nearly impossible to find a space!

I live in a tall apartment building; most people here do. My family tried to find a place as close to my school as possible. I spend a lot of time at school and I study even more at home. My friends and I hope our work pays off by helping us get accepted at a good university. I want to be a computer analyst, so I know I have a lot of work ahead of me.

While you are here, I hope you can take a short visit out into the countryside. The hills and trees are beautiful, and there are many parks where you can take a peaceful walk. You should also visit a restaurant and sample some of our good food. But don't expect peace and quiet there. We like to talk a lot as we eat with our friends.

More than anything I hope you can meet John and Joy Sisk in Kaohsiung. They are from America, but they have lived in Taiwan for several years. In my country, many people have never heard of Jesus, and the Sisks have come to tell them. They love my country and its people just as I do. I hope you will love it too!



## The Country

- ♥ Taiwan has a land area of 13,892 square miles, making it about the size of Massachusetts and Delaware combined.
- ♥ The nation consists of Taiwan — a large island shaped like a sweet potato — and several tiny island clusters located between the East and South China seas. Only about 100 miles separates Taiwan from China.
- ♥ A high mountain range runs down the center of Taiwan. Jade Mountain is the tallest peak on the island and the highest mountain in Southeast Asia. Eastern Taiwan is the most unspoiled part of the country and has the smallest population. Most of the people live in cities and farming areas in the west.
- ♥ Taiwan gets several typhoons each year, usually in the fall. People call them *taifeng*, which means “great wind.”
- ♥ Summers are generally hot and humid. Winters are short and mild, although snow is common on the mountaintops.
- ♥ Some of the main crops grown in Taiwan are rice, tea, pineapples, and betel nuts. Betel nuts are chewed like tobacco and produce a mild narcotic “buzz.” The “juice” made by chewing is blood red in color and stains a person’s teeth and mouth. Betel nuts can be addictive, but chewing them is not illegal.
- ♥ In the 1500s, Portuguese explorers visited Taiwan and called it *Ilha Formosa*, meaning “beautiful island.” The island was called Formosa for 400 years until the name changed to Taiwan.
- ♥ Taiwan’s currency is the Taiwan new dollar. About 29 Taiwan dollars equal one U.S. dollar.
- ♥ The Formosan black bear and the Mikado pheasant are found nowhere else in the world. The Mikado pheasant is featured on Taiwan’s \$1,000 bill.
- ♥ Fifty years ago Taipei, Taiwan’s capital,

was a small farming town. Today about 3 million people live there.

- ♥ The national flag is red with a large blue square in the upper left corner. In the center of the square is a white sun surrounded by 12 triangular rays extending from it.

## The People

- ♥ Taiwan’s population is 23 million, which is about twice that of Ohio. One of the most densely populated places in the world, Taiwan averages about 1,850 people for every square mile of land.
- ♥ Most of the people are Taiwanese (84 percent) and mainland Chinese (14 percent). The rest are descendants from about 11 other groups that represent the island’s original people groups. The largest of these groups is the Ami people.
- ♥ The main languages of Taiwan are Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese (also called Hokkien), and Hakka.
- ♥ Taiwan was once a world leader in manufactured goods. However, the factories caused damage to the water and air because of smog and pollution. The nation changed its industries to produce items used in technology. It is now a leading exporter of computers.
- ♥ The majority of Taiwanese practice a mixture of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. The nation is filled with temples and shrines honoring thousands of gods and goddesses. People go regularly to the temples to burn incense and offer food in an attempt to please the gods.
- ♥ Because Taiwan’s cities are so crowded, most homes and apartments are small. Several generations may live in the same house, and the oldest person in the home receives great honor and respect.
- ♥ Children are under great pressure to study hard so they can go to the best

universities and make their families proud. Some students study up to 16 hours a day, seven days a week for an entire year to get the best scores on college entrance exams.

- ♥ Basketball and baseball are popular sports. Martial arts are often taught in school.
- ♥ Almost every type of food is available in Taiwan, but noodles and rice are always favorites. People usually use chopsticks instead of forks and spoons.

## Did you know?

- ♥ Among Taiwan's unusual animals is the Formosan pangolin. The pangolin's name is the Malayan word for "roller." Similar to an armadillo and an anteater, it rolls into a ball when frightened, resembling a pine cone. It also sprays like a skunk when threatened. Its tongue can be as much as two feet long and is attached to the animal's hip bones. Demand for its meat and hide has put the pangolin on the endangered list.
- ♥ The Formosan serow is another interesting animal. Similar to a mountain goat, it stamps its two front hooves and sometimes screams when it is upset. It grows only three to four feet tall but can jump up to seven feet high — twice its height. How much would twice your height be?
- ♥ Taiwan is sometimes called the butterfly kingdom because of its many species of butterflies. One area, called butterfly valley, is home to as many as 50 million silver-veined lemon emigrant butterflies.
- ♥ In Mandarin Chinese — the official language of Taiwan — the word *ma* can mean "horse," "mother," "to scold," or in place of a question mark depending on the tone the speaker uses. New Mandarin learners are taught to practice their tones by repeating the word *ma* five times in a sentence that means "Did mama scold the horse?"

The meaning of each word depends on the tone in which it is spoken!

- ♥ Many homes in Taiwan do not have ovens because baking is not common there.
- ♥ In many businesses in Taiwan, employees take a 15- to 30-minute nap at their desks. They believe rest after lunch is good for their health.
- ♥ While many kinds of foods are available in Taiwan, some are quite unusual. They include stinky tofu, cockscomb, roasted sparrows, snake blood soup, and fried bees.
- ♥ Be careful when giving gifts in Taiwan. Handkerchiefs are signs of crying and sadness. Towels are often given at funerals. Clocks and watches are believed associated with one's life ending, and knives and scissors are signs of cutting off a friendship.

## The Assemblies of God in Taiwan

Dutch and Spanish missionaries brought Christianity to Taiwan in the late 1500s. The first Assemblies of God missionaries came to live in Taiwan in 1948. Today more than 2,000 believers attend 48 Assemblies of God churches. A Bible school is teaching God's Word to students training to become pastors and church leaders. A growing children's ministry is reaching boys and girls in schools and camps.



## A Look at Language

Although Taiwanese is often spoken among the people, Mandarin Chinese is considered the language of business in Taiwan. Mandarin is a very difficult language to learn because the meaning of the word depends on the word and the tone used to say the word. Here are some common words in Mandarin.

### English

Hello  
How are you?  
Good morning  
Good night  
Thank you  
No thanks  
One  
Two  
Three  
Four  
Five  
Six  
Seven  
Eight  
Nine  
Ten

### Mandarin

ni hao  
ni hao ma  
zao an  
wan an  
xie xie  
bu yong, xie xie  
yi  
er  
san  
si  
wu  
liu  
qi  
ba  
jiu  
shi

### Taiwanese Truths

Here are three sayings from Taiwan. What do you think they mean?

1. A striped cat will produce striped kittens.
2. A beautiful person might not have a beautiful life.
3. Something that looks good does not necessarily taste good.



# Things to do in

## Catch the Chicks

Here is a fun group game that is popular in Taiwan.

1. Choose a girl to be the hen and another girl to be an eagle. The rest of the group are chicks.
2. All the chicks should stand in a row behind the hen.
3. The eagle's goal is to capture a chick, but the hen's goal is to protect her brood. As she darts here and there to avoid the eagle, the chicks will dutifully follow.
4. If a chick is caught, the eagle and the chick switch places.
5. For variety, choose a new hen after every three or four chases.

## Plum Blossom Decoration

The plum blossom is Taiwan's national flower. This craft will help remind you to pray for the people of Taiwan.

You will need:

- ♥ Stiff burlap fabric
- ♥ Pink and white poster board
- ♥ Scissors
- ♥ Glue
- ♥ Brown, pink, and green tissue paper
- ♥ Pencil
- ♥ Lace, if desired

What to do:

1. Cut the burlap fabric and the white construction paper into four and one-half by six-inch rectangles. Glue the burlap onto the construction paper.
2. Cut the pink construction paper into a six by 12-inch rectangle. Center the burlap rectangles on the pink rectangle and glue them in place.
3. Twist strips of brown tissue paper to look like thin branches or twigs. Glue them to the burlap.
4. Cut pink tissue paper into one-inch squares. Bend each square around the point of a pencil to make a blossom shape. Glue the blossom to the end of

a tissue paper branch. Repeat with as many blossoms as you wish.

5. Add small bits of green tissue paper to serve as leaves.
6. Twist a long strip of any color tissue paper. Glue each end of the strip to the back of the picture as a hanger.
7. If desired, glue lace around the burlap edges for a more finished look.

## Food from Taiwan

Many homes in Taiwan do not have ovens, so treats like cakes and cookies are not common. Make this sweet treat instead and let your friends and family sample it.

## Taiwan Sweet Bananas

You will need:

- ♥ 4 bananas, peeled and cut into chunks
- ♥ 60 ounces (4 – 15 oz. cans) coconut milk
- ♥ One-half teaspoon ginger
- ♥ 1 teaspoon Chinese five spice powder
- ♥ 3 tablespoons powdered sugar
- ♥ Cooked rice

What to do:

1. Put all ingredients except cooked rice in a medium-size saucepan.
2. Bring to a slow simmer, gently stirring bananas occasionally.
3. Cook 15 minutes.
4. Spoon mixture over cooked rice.
5. (Note: For fun, try eating the mixture with chopsticks!)



Taiwan