

Holidays, Festivals & Events

Public Holidays

Starting from 2015, any public holiday that falls on the weekend will have the preceding or following workday designated as a day off in compensation.

Founding Day of the ROC

中華民國開國紀念日

(New Year's Day 元旦)

January 1

January 1, 1912 is the official birthday of the Republic of China (ROC). At sunrise, a flag-raising ceremony is held at the Presidential Office Building, where the president, government officials and many citizens gather to enjoy an array of processions and performances.

Lunar New Year 農曆新年

(Spring Festival 春節)

First three days, first lunar month

(Public holidays: February 6-14 in 2016; January 27-February 1 in 2017)

The Lunar New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, is Taiwan's preeminent holiday. While the holiday officially spans about a week in January or February, customary festivities begin weeks earlier with year-end banquets celebrating the past year's hard work and conclude with the Lantern Festival 元宵節 (see below) two weeks into the lunar year.

Ahead of the holiday, families give their homes a thorough cleaning and

decorate the front doors with red paper bearing auspicious words or poems. On Lunar New Year's Eve, family members enjoy an elaborate and sumptuous dinner together, pass out *hongbao* 紅包 (red envelopes of money) to children, and stay up late as fireworks welcome the arrival of the Lunar New Year. During the long holiday, many visit relatives and friends, travel abroad or domestically, or seek blessings from deities and ancestors at temples or home altars.

Peace Memorial Day 和平紀念日

February 28

On this day, the nation remembers the tens of thousands lost in the violent aftermath of a riot that broke out on February 28, 1947 due to tensions between civilians and the government. The incident left a deep impact on the people and society of Taiwan, and many mourn the victims by visiting memorial monuments and parks throughout the island, including the National 228 Memorial Museum 二二八國家紀念館 in Taipei City 臺北市. Government and civic organizations hold memorial services, concerts, art exhibitions and other activities in an effort to heal the wounds and close the divisions caused by the incident.

Children's Day 兒童節

April 4

In 2011, Taiwan officially designated Children's Day a public holiday

to recognize and protect the rights of children. In recent years, children's issues have gained increasing attention, and welfare laws have been amended to afford young people stronger protection under the law. On this day, government and civic organizations sponsor a range of family festivities and special events where kids and parents can have fun together.

Tomb Sweeping Day 民族掃墓節 (Qingming Festival 清明節)

April 4 in 2016 and 2017

Tomb Sweeping Day is a centuries-old tradition of tidying up one's family gravesite as a way of showing respect for one's ancestors. Plant overgrowth is cleared away from the site; tombstones are swept and cleaned; and paper and stones are left behind to signify that the grave has been visited. With cremation becoming increasingly common, more and more families commemorate this day by paying respect to their ancestors at columbaria, where cremation urns are stored. This holiday is also known as the Qingming Festival, referring to the usually clear and bright weather in April.

Dragon Boat Festival 端午節 (Poet's Day 詩人節)

*Fifth day, fifth lunar month
June 9 in 2016; May 30 in 2017*

The centerpiece celebrations of this holiday, which usually takes place in June, are dragon-boat regattas conducted on rivers. The best known of these competitions are held in Taipei City and Changhua County 彰化縣. The signature

culinary fare of this celebration is *zongzi* 粽子, glutinous rice dumplings with a variety of fillings, all wrapped and steamed in bamboo leaves.

Legend has it that these customs began in remembrance of Qu Yuan 屈原, a talented poet who lived more than 2,000 years ago. He was also a loyal counselor to the emperor, but sadly drowned himself in the river after being falsely accused of treason. To save Qu's corpse from hungry fish, local fishermen scattered *zongzi* into the water to feed the fish and paddled out on boats to scare them away.

Mid-Autumn Festival 中秋節

*15th day, eighth lunar month
September 15 in 2016; October 4
in 2017*

Along with the Lunar New Year and the Dragon Boat Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival is one of the three largest holidays in Taiwan. Family members gather in the evening to eat "moon cakes"—thick moon-shaped pastries with rich filling—while admiring the first autumnal full moon. Nighttime barbecues have become popular as well.

Traditionally, people also commemorate the mythical Chang-e 嫦娥, a beautiful woman who flew to the moon after taking an elixir of immortality; she is said to be accompanied there by a jade rabbit.

National Day 國慶日

October 10

This celebration is held on the anniversary of the 1911 Wuchang Uprising 武昌



起義, a milestone event that later led to the birth of the ROC. In front of the Presidential Office Building, foreign dignitaries and overseas Taiwanese join citizens in viewing a parade that showcases the nation's traditional and contemporary cultures. Honor guards, school marching bands, indigenous groups, professional singers and dancers, as well as military vehicles are among the highlights. The National Day Fireworks Display, rotating annually among different cities, turns the night sky into a dazzling explosion of colors.

Festivals and Events

Lantern Festival 元宵節

Falling on the 15th day of the first lunar month, the Lantern Festival is the culmination of the Lunar New Year season. Across the nation, colorful lanterns are displayed and sweet glutinous rice balls are eaten as a traditional snack.

Notable celebrations include the spectacular Pingxi Sky Lantern Festival 平溪天燈節 in New Taipei City 新北市, the Miaoli Bombing the Dragon Festival 炸龍 in Miaoli County 苗栗縣, the Blasting of Han Dan 炸寒單 in Taitung City 臺東市 and the Yanshui Beehive Fireworks Festival 鹽水蜂炮 in Tainan City 臺南市. In addition, the Taiwan Lantern Festival 臺灣燈會, which features a colossal lantern fashioned after the Chinese zodiac animal of the year, rotates around the country each year; this festival was held in Taoyuan City 桃園市 from February 22 to March 6 in 2016, the Year of the Monkey.

Dajia Ma Zu Pilgrimage

大甲媽祖遶境

The largest religious event in the country, the Dajia Ma Zu Pilgrimage honors the sea goddess Ma Zu 媽祖, regarded by many as Taiwan's most important guardian deity. Every third lunar month, hundreds of thousands of the faithful take part in the nine-day, eight-night procession to celebrate her birthday, setting out from Jenn Lann Temple 鎮瀾宮 in Dajia District 大甲區, Taichung City 臺中市 and passing through Changhua, Yunlin 雲林 and Chiayi 嘉義 counties before circling back to the starting point.

New Taipei City Wan Jin Shi

Marathon 新北市萬金石馬拉松

Since 2003, the Wan Jin Shi Marathon has been held every March in New Taipei City. The scenic route boasts a stunning mountain view and seascape along the beautiful northern coast of Taiwan. Every year, around 12,500 runners from home and abroad take part in the event. In 2014, 2015 and 2016, the race was awarded a Bronze Label by the International Association of Athletics Federations.

Flying Fish Festival 蘭嶼飛魚季

Each March through July, the aboriginal Yami 雅美 (or Dawu 達悟) people of Lanyu Island (Orchid Island) 蘭嶼 off Taiwan's southeast coast hold the Flying Fish Festival to honor their most important source of livelihood. The flying fish are carried to Lanyu Island on the warm Kuroshio Current every year. Elaborate ceremonies during these months include blessings of the

boats, prayers for an abundant catch, and end-of-harvest rituals.

Confucius Ceremonies 祭孔

Every spring and autumn, Confucius 孔子 temples across the country hold ceremonies to pay homage to the ancient Chinese philosopher, scholar and teacher. The island's oldest Confucius temple was built in 1666 in Tainan City; it was also the most prestigious school of its time. Today, the temple still performs elaborate Confucius ceremonies with traditional attire, music and dance. One popular ritual involves students plucking hair from oxen in order to gain wisdom.

Spring Scream 春天吶喊

Every April since 1995, indie rock bands and music lovers from home and abroad have gathered at Pingtung County's 屏東縣 Eluanbi Park 鵝鑾鼻公園 for this multi-stage outdoor concert festival. In addition to days of nonstop electric vibes, the event also showcases artistic creations, games, installation art as well as products by independent designers.

Hakka Tung Blossom Festival

客家桐花祭

The Hakka Tung Blossom Festival, held each April to May since 2002, celebrates the culture of the Hakka people, whose ancestors planted tung trees in the foothills of northern and central Taiwan. In bygone times, oil pressed from tung seeds served as a commercially important export. Today, these forests draw visitors to beautiful mountain paths that are covered with fallen tung flowers.

Tourists can experience the charm and cuisines of nearby Hakka communities where various music and dance events are also staged.

Penghu International Fireworks

Festival 澎湖國際海上火花節

Spanning one to two months between April and June, the Penghu International Fireworks Festival has become the top tourist event on the outlying Penghu Islands 澎湖群島 since it began in 2003. Spectators can enjoy stunning fireworks from only 300 meters away as the displays are set off over the beautiful waters of Penghu Bay 澎湖灣. A lively mix of musical performances rounds out the festivities.

Austronesian Cultural Arts

Festival 南島文化藝術節

Launched in 1999 and now held biennially, the Austronesian Cultural Arts Festival in Taitung County 臺東縣 showcases the cultures of Austronesian aboriginal peoples in Taiwan and across the Pacific. Featuring musical performances, art exhibits, and traditional food and craft fairs, the event also provides opportunities for exchanges among Austronesian communities worldwide. In 2016, festivities ran from July through November and focused on the theme of ritual ceremonies.

Taiwan International Balloon

Fiesta 臺灣國際熱氣球嘉年華

The Taiwan International Balloon Fiesta in Taitung County has become a popular summer event since it was first



held in 2011. Tourists are taken high on hot air balloon rides for panoramic views of the breathtaking East Rift Valley 花東縱谷. The festival's other major draws include evening balloon light and music shows as well as balloon flight performances by international pilots.

Ho-Hai-Yan Gongliao Rock Festival 貢寮國際海洋音樂祭

Every July since 2000, young people have flocked to this rock music festival on Fulong Beach 福隆海水浴場 in New Taipei City to celebrate their summer break. Integrating the beauty of Taiwan's northeast coast with the spirit of creativity, the event has grown into one of the most well-known performance platforms for independent music.

Yilan International Children's Folklore and Folkgame Festival 宜蘭國際童玩藝術節

The Yilan International Children's Folklore and Folkgame Festival is held every July and August in Yilan County's 宜蘭縣 Dongshan River Water Park 冬山河親水公園. Launched in 1996, the event offers children and their families a host of games, exhibitions and folk performances. Scores of folk dance troupes and bands from around the world are invited to the event, which has earned recognition from CIOFF (International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts, an official partner of UNESCO) for its preservation and transmission of cultural heritage.

Ghost Month 鬼月

Tradition holds that the gates of the underworld are opened during the seventh lunar month to allow spirits from the realm of hungry ghosts to roam freely and seek comfort in the world of the living. Religious observances come to a climax on the 15th day of this lunar cycle (usually falling in mid-to-late August), when lavish sacrificial feasts are laid out at temples and in front of homes and shops to placate these wandering souls.

Sun Moon Lake International Swimming Carnival

日月潭萬人泳渡

Every September, tens of thousands of swimmers from home and abroad flock to Taiwan's largest natural lake, Sun Moon Lake 日月潭 in Nantou County 南投縣, to test their endurance in this 3-kilometer open-water swimming event. Named the world's biggest swimming event by the International Olympic Committee in 1995 and inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame in 2002, the activity drew over 20,000 people from 33 countries in 2015.

Kaohsiung Zuoying Wannian Folklore Festival 高雄左營萬年季

Each October since 2001, the Kaohsiung City Government 高雄市政府 has hosted the Zuoying Wannian Folklore Festival to mark the historical and cultural heritage of Zuoying District 左營區, known in earlier times as Wannian County 萬年縣. The nine-day festival also includes religious events such as the Fiery Lion

Parade 迎火獅 hosted by local temples, fireworks and exhibitions.

Taiwan Open of Surfing

臺灣國際衝浪公開賽

Every November since 2011, the Taiwan Open of Surfing has been held at Jinzun Harbor 金樽漁港 in Taitung County's Donghe Township 東河鄉, where perfect waves, beautiful scenery and long stretches of sandy beaches abound. Widely known as a surfers' paradise, Taitung was certified as an international surfing competition venue by the Asia Surfing Championships

in 2012. The event also became part of the Association of Surfing Professionals World Tour in 2013, making it the crowning surf event in Taiwan.

Taipei New Year's Eve Countdown Party

At midnight on New Year's Eve, fireworks displays light up the skies throughout Taiwan. The most dazzling of these is the Taipei 101 台北101 show: more than a million people gather in the adjacent city hall plaza and its neighboring areas to ring in the New Year and admire fireworks launched from the skyscraper itself. ■