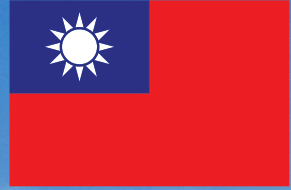


Taiwan

臺灣



Study Tour Report

13 – 22 April 2024



Australian Institute
of International Affairs
Victoria

2024 Taiwan Study Tour Report

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2024 Taiwan Study Tour Report



In April 2024, the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) Victoria hosted the first international Study Tour in five years. Returning to Taiwan, the Study Tour aligned with the state's recent presidential election. The January elections saw the Democratic Progressive Party (民主進步黨) maintaining the presidential seat, influencing how Taiwan would conduct relations with the People's Republic of China and the United States.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan notably achieved 'COVID zero' status without a mass lockdown. It became one of the few economies to strengthen amidst widespread major economic deterioration.

The Study Tour, led by Walkley Award-winning journalist Rowan Callick OBE FAIIA, aimed to explore Taiwan through various local and international perspectives, showcasing the state's cultural diversity, layered history, political nuances and economic landscape.



DAY 1

The Study Tour began with an Orientation Briefing over lunch at 木色藝文咖啡 Mu's Café, followed by a visit to the iconic Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall. Dedicated to the late dictator, the monument memorialises the legacy of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek and examines Taiwan's journey to democracy.

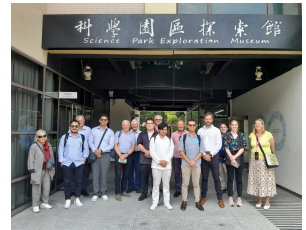


That evening, the Study Tour watched the sunset from Taipei 101, another emblematic symbol of Taiwan. The first day was concluded with a banquet of Taiwanese, Chinese, and Western dishes at 筷炒 Kuai Chao restaurant.



DAY 2

The second day began with an introduction to the diverse Indigenous communities in Taiwan and their survival against waves of colonialism at the Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines. Afterwards, the group crossed the road to the National Palace Museum, home to the world's largest and arguably finest collection of Chinese art. Originally from the Forbidden City in Beijing, these artefacts were moved to the National Palace Museum during the Kuomintang retreat to Taipei in 1948-49.



That evening, the participants tried local street food at one of Taipei's most well-known and largest night markets in Shilin.

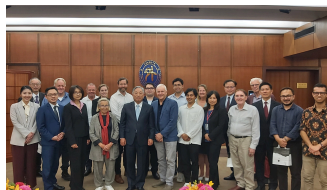
DAY 3

Day 3 saw a day trip to Hsinchu Science Park, a centre for semiconductors and technology modelled after California's Silicon Valley. The group received an introduction to the Science Park and observed Hsinchu's technology firsthand at the Science Park Museum.



After returning to Taipei, the group was invited for a roundtable meeting with Rob Fergusson, the Australian Representative in Taiwan at the Australian Office.

DAY 4



The day commenced with a reflection on the White Terror period under the Kuomintang dictatorship at the 228 Peace Memorial Park, commemorating the victims of the February 28 massacre in 1947. Adjacent to the park is the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where the group attended a meeting hosted by Deputy Foreign Minister James Tien to discuss Taiwanese economic and diplomatic relations. Following the meeting, the group explored the gardens and museum at the Official Shilin Residence of Chiang Kai-Shek and his wife, Soong Mei-Ling.

DAY 5



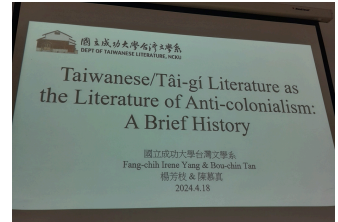
The delegation boarded Taiwan's high-speed rail from Taipei to Tainan, the oldest city in Taiwan. After lunch in the city centre, the participants split into two groups. The first participated in a walking tour of the city, including historical streets, a famous bakery, Tainan Grand Mazu Temple, the Hayashi Department Store, and the Tainan Confucius Temple. The other group received an introduction to the development of Taiwanese literature at

the National Museum of Taiwan Literature, complementing their meeting at the National Cheng Kung University the next day.

DAY 6

The group was invited to attend a post-graduate lecture by Dr. Fang-Chih and Professor Tan Boo-chin from the Department of Taiwanese Literature at National Cheng Kung University. The lecture focused on the history, culture and survival of Taigi (臺語), a distinctive language related to Southern Min languages, also referred to as 'Taiwanese' and 'Taiwanese Hokkien'.

Following the lecture, the group visited Fort Zeelandia, a building predating the first Chinese territorial claims of the island. Also known as the Anping Fort, it was the stronghold of Dutch colonial rule until its capture by Ming loyalist Koxinga in 1661, whom National Cheng Kung University was named after. Following the lunch at Anping Old Street, the delegation left for Chikan Tower. Originally built by the Dutch in 1653, the building was used as an outpost by the Ming, the Qing, the Japanese, and the Kuomintang. The day concluded with Hong Kong-style yum cha at Xin Hua Dim Sum. This cuisine reflects the influence of the many immigrants from Hong Kong living in Taiwan.



DAY 7



The delegation began the day by taking a Tze-Chiang train to Kaohsiung and having lunch at the Sizihwan (West Bay) district. They crossed through the Sizihwan tunnel, the entrance to National Sun Yat-Sen University, for a meeting with Dr. Yujen Kuo, a Political Science expert at the Institute of China and Asia-Pacific Studies. Dr. Yujen Kuo discussed the nuances of cross-strait relations and Taiwan's domestic security policies.



The rest of the day centred around the scenery of Sizihwan, including the view of the Port of Kaohsiung from the historical British Consulate at Takow. The delegation had a short ice cream break at 丸浜霜淇淋, a Japanese-style speciality ice cream shop which is a local favourite for National Sun Yat-Sen University students.



They then took a short ferry to Cijin Island, where the delegation strolled along the local market stalls, relaxed on the black sand of Cijin beach, and

hiked to the Qing Dynasty-era Cihou Fort. The day concluded with a group dinner of traditional noodles and dumplings, followed by an optional visit to the picturesque Sanfong Gong Temple.

DAY 8

The last day in Southern Taiwan began with a culturally immersive silk-screen painting activity at the historic KW2 warehouse, built under Japanese colonialism. The group created their own fishing flags, a tradition brought to Kaohsiung from Japan. Following this activity, representatives from National Sun Yat-Sen University led a walking tour that focused on the history and culture of the Yancheng district. The delegation explored Kaohsiung's famous street art at the Pier2 Art Centre, before having high tea at 飛鳶 tea saloon, with an impressive view of the city. The group returned to Taipei by high-speed rail that evening.





DAY 9



Day 9 was scheduled as an optional rest day after an eventful four days in the South. The delegation boarded a two-hour bus to the northernmost point of Taiwan in Laomei. Following a lunch of fresh seafood at Fuji Fishing Harbour, the group explored the Jingang Temple. This temple is famous for its four-faced Buddha and a tunnel depicting punishment in the equivalent of hell in the Buddhist afterlife. The day concluded with a group dinner of Michelin-star dumplings at Hang Zhou Xiao Long, featuring a well-received chocolate Xiao Long Bao dessert.





DAY 10

The last day began with a tour of the Presidential Office Building. Originally constructed in 1919 as the seat of the Governor General under Japanese rule, the building has housed the offices of the Taiwanese President since 1949. Following the tour, participants had the opportunity to explore the street art and rainbow crossing at the Ximending Walking District, reminiscent of Shibuya crossing in Tokyo.

The Study Tour later hosted two senior Australian journalists from Taipei, Kathleen Calderwood, the East Asia correspondent for the ABC, and Chris Buckley, the chief China correspondent for the New York Times. The tour concluded with a final debrief over coffee.

*Written by Jesse Dass
AIIA VIC Study Tour Intern*



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2024 Taiwan Study Tour Participants

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Robyn Byrne OAM
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