

What to Bring

Clothing

Generally, dress in Taiwan is about the same as in metropolitan areas of the United States. Because the weather is more humidity, Cotton clothes will be more comfortable for most of people. Evening dress is seldom worn except to the most formal dinner parties or banquets, but there will be a few occasions (the Double Ten reception on October 10, the welcome reception) when coat and tie for men and semiformal (“dressy”) dress for women would be appropriate, however, so you are advised to bring at least two such items of clothing.

Westerners find it difficult to buy ready made, inexpensive shoes in larger sizes in Taiwan, or even clothes in larger sizes. The average Chinese is both shorter and slimmer than the average American. Therefore, it is suggested that you bring a good supply of the clothing items mentioned below, if you are taller or heavier than the average Chinese--or be prepared to have clothes tailor-made.

All Visitors May Wish to Bring the Following :

Rain-shoes / boots, bathing suits; undergarments, preferably cotton since it is cooler and helps prevent fungus (American-made underwear is sometimes difficult to find and always expensive); sneakers for hiking (good quality and inexpensive here); warm sweaters and heavy jackets for winter and chilly damp days.

Be aware that most homes and classrooms do not have central heating, or any heating, thus, it is necessary to bring heavy jackets and sweaters, especially in northern Taiwan and Kinmen.

During the chilly and damp winter, you need to wear warm clothing (sweaters, jackets, warm footwear) even indoors, including classrooms at local universities.

It is better, when choosing winter clothes, to select thinner ones which can be worn in several layers rather than thick ones. In this way, you can adjust to temperature changes during the day. Heavy wools and cottons are also very slow drying if no automatic dryer is available. In the winter, it may take as long as 4 or 5 days for medium weight cotton clothes to dry.

However, you are strongly recommended to bring warm clothes with you to Taiwan.

For Women :

Pack all the nylon lingerie, girdles, bras, and hosiery, and shoes (If you wear large sizes i.e. 8 1/2 and above) that you will need.

For warm weather bring the following : ample hot weather clothing including washable cottons, both simple and dressy; at least one outfit that can be worn in the afternoon and on into the evening; comfortable walking shoes; sleeveless sundresses; shorts; jeans. Since air conditioning can be quite strong in restaurants and other public places, be prepared with a lightweight sweater.

For the winter season bring a good suit, light-weight enough to wear a sweater under the jacket, quilted raincoat or one with a zip-in lining, and several warm sweaters, skirts, knee socks or leggings, turtle-neck cotton polo shirts which may be worn under blouses, a wool dress, a warm and thick bathrobe, a wool scarf, and wool slacks. A warm stole or good sweater may be necessary to wear with dinner dresses as the apartments and schoolrooms can be cold and drafty. For inside wear, women may want to bring some knitted slippers with foam rubber soles (but slippers of all kinds are available at reasonable prices in the night markets).

For Men :

Light-weight slacks and wash and wear short-sleeved shirts are the accepted summer daytime apparel, with a light-weight suit for special occasions. Be sure to bring enough cotton shirts, underwear, socks, and shoes. Large sizes in socks and shoes can be difficult to find. Local ready-made shirts in smaller sizes are available, but if you need larger sizes, you should either bring them or be prepared to have them tailor-made here. Certain American brands, although available, are much more expensive than in the U.S. Bring a hot-weather hat, jeans and shorts for hiking and informal trips to the coast. For winter, bring sweaters, wool socks, slacks, heavy jackets, and a dark suit for evening wear. Heavy long underwear, or ski-type under-clothing, depending on the individual, can give comfort on cold days.

For Children :

Use the suggested lists for adults as a guide and, if your child is small, read the next section. Tights would be very good for cold weather, as would two or three heavyweight sleeper suits for children who kick the covers off at night. Local synthetic and cotton materials including corduroy are inexpensive. You can build a child's wardrobe here rather than bring a great many clothes. There are also ready-made children's knitted wool play suits with long pants which are colorful, warm, and durable. Knitting shops will custom-make such suits very cheaply if you prefer. Generally there is a wide selection of ready-made children's clothing for prices considerably lower than stateside. Local plastic sandals or slippers make good cool summer shoes for home use. Children's raincoats, boots, umbrellas, and lunch boxes can be purchased locally.

Baby Clothing and Other Items :

Disposable diapers are readily available here. Local brands are reasonably priced. Ready-made baby clothes are available in a wide variety of styles, but none have plastic lined pants. American and Japanese brands of baby bottles, plastic and glass, are available at two and a half times the U.S. price, but special types like the Playtex Nurser are not found here.

NOTE: A former grantee comments : “When our grandson visited we found everything needed was easily available in almost any Wellcome supermarkets and Chuan Lian supermarkets [the local chain stores]. The prices were slightly higher on some items than in the US, but I think the price differential has narrowed a bit.”

Clothing Synopsis : In general, for the entire family's clothing, keep in mind these guidelines :

- Mildew is a problem if you have too many clothes or leather items which are seldom worn. You may want to bring De-moist, a drying gel in a large packet, or a spray can of Mildew-rid which will keep a closet dry for six months. Do not bring moth balls as local ones are of adequate quality.
- Clothes may take several days to dry in inclement winter weather, but local Laundromats have electric dryers.
- Standard dry-cleaning is of good quality, but special care cleaning may be hazardous.
- Temperatures are erratic even in the course of one day and buildings will seldom have heating. Remember, with few exceptions there is no central heat in houses, apartments or schools. It is necessary to bring your sweaters or heavy jackets. However buildings at the Taipei American School (elementary and secondary school) are both heated and air-conditioning is present everywhere, often so cool that you need to bring a sweater or a jacket during the summer if you know you will be in an air-conditioned restaurant.
- Clothes of all kinds can be tailor-made less expensively than in the States. Most materials are available here, but if you have favorites it would be best to bring them with you.
- Surplus export goods such as sweaters and shirts are often available at street markets for extremely low prices and often in extra large sizes, since they were intended for the American and European markets. But the supplies are not dependable.
- Local detergents and bleaches are of comparable quality and price.
- If you are taller or heavier than average, bring shoes and other clothing from the U.S., as it may be difficult to find larger sizes here.

Other Household Items

Sheets and towels are much more expensive here than in the States; it is worthwhile to bring them with you. You can sometimes find linens sold at markets or by street vendors at reasonable prices, but of questionable quality.

The high humidity combined with the lack of central heating makes an electric blanket a great comfort during the winter to dispel the dampness, but they are twice the price here as in the United States. An open sleeping bag can be used as a heavy comforter, also. If you are bringing school-age children to Taiwan, a sleeping bag would be handy. They can be used at home, for spending nights with friends, and for campouts.

If you are a needlework enthusiast, bring your instructions in English. Knitting yarns are quite good here - know or have a conversion chart for needles and yarns. According to a former American grantee comment: DMC embroidery floss is available" in many different needlework stores and craft shops. Crafters might also want to take advantage of the opportunity to take lessons in beadwork and traditional knotting techniques. Several craft stores include a free lesson or two if you buy the supplies to make the item. Seamstresses might be interested to know there is a Singer store on Xin Yi Road (信義路) very near the intersection with Lishui St. (麗水街) in the neighborhood of Dongmen MRT Station. Cross-stitch fabric is also available.

Entertainment Needs :

Home Entertainment

For children, bring their favorite card and word games (Scrabble, Uno, Monopoly), as they are unavailable or expensive here. Puzzles are fun to have and paperback activity books. A large supply of books is not necessary, as the American School libraries are quite good and several bookstores carry children's books in English.

For the whole family, a VCR or DVD player would be worth the trouble of bringing. Those grantees with housing furnished will have a TV; for others, a Taiwan television, VCR or DVD player can be purchased for a price equal or slightly more than one in the States. There are many neighborhood video clubs that rent an assortment of American movies with Chinese subtitles at relatively low cost. There is a 24-hour English-language radio station, ICRT (FM 100.7 - International Community Radio Taiwan) which has local and international news, music, etc. Cable TV is also widely available, and there is a wide selection of channels, including CNN, BBC, HBO, etc. Recent American movies are shown in theaters here, in English with Chinese subtitles.

Drugs, Cosmetics, Toilet Articles, Notions

(See also "Medical Supplies")

Unusual American prescriptions may be difficult and expensive to fill in Taiwan. Arrange with your doctor to bring what you will need in the line of special medicines used regularly by your family. It is suggested that you bring the latest set of your dental X-rays, and your eye glasses, even though eye glasses are very reasonably priced here.

Medicines carried must be declared at customs upon arrival in Taiwan and show a medical certificate or doctor's prescription, according to the policy of the food and drug safety. Please check the regulations of Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on what types of medications are allowed into Taiwan on the FDA's website: <https://www.fda.gov.tw/EN/index.aspx>

You may also wish to bring a good supply of your favorite over-the-counter medicines and vitamins. Chinese drugs lack the potency of American medicines of the same nature. Though some American medicines and vitamins are available here, they are usually much more expensive than in the U.S., and if you plan to travel in Asia while living here you should also bring a good supply because medical facilities in other Asian countries may not be up to Taiwan or American standards.

American cosmetics cost more in Taiwan than in the U.S. If you are attached to a particular type, you may wish to bring a sufficient supply for your stay in Taiwan, or arrange for someone in the U.S. to send you what you need regularly! Hair coloring in shades other than black and henna is becoming easier to find, at such stores as Watsons and Cosmed.

A small sewing kit and a small first aid kit in your hand baggage may be useful.

NOTE : If anyone in your family is subject to asthma attacks, be sure to bring an ample supply of the most effective medicines, sprays, etc., that you are accustomed to using in the U.S., as well as any doctor's prescription you may need. Grantees with asthma have found that some of the drugs they were accustomed to using are not available here.