The Aborigines of Taiwan
Meet ethnic tribes that occupied the island before the Chinese.

Taiwan’s first inhabitants were of Malay and Polynesian origins. Today, the island is home to nearly half a million indigenous people—about 2 percent of the total population—in 13 officially recognized tribes. The indigenous groups have diverse languages and cultural practices. Some of the tribes, including the three largest (the Atayal, the Amis, and the Paiwan), have developed interesting visitor attractions. • The Wulai Atayal Museum (12 Wulai St., Wulai Village, Taipei County; www.atayal.tpc.gov.tw) features Atayal cultural exhibits near the village’s hot springs and celebrated waterfall. • The Amis Folk Center (25 Shinsuesen Rd., Chenggong Township, Taitung County; 089-841751) has weavers, traditional dwellings, and dance performances in an amphitheater. • The Sandimen Recreation Area (Sandimen Township, Pingtung County; 08-7992221) hosts the Paiwan tribe’s August Harvest Festival. See stone-slab houses, buy aboriginal crafts, and taste local delicacies such as crunchy bamboo shoots. • The Formosan Aboriginal Culture Village (45 Jintian Lane, Yuchi Township, Nantou County; www.nine.com.tw) comprises nine traditional villages, lush gardens, and amusement rides near Sun Moon Lake. —Emily Haile

SOURCEBOOK
Taiwan Essentials

THE BASICS
Entry requirements U.S. citizens need a valid passport to enter Taiwan. Time Taiwan is 12 hours ahead of U.S. eastern standard time. Money The new Taiwan dollar; for conversion rates, go to www.oanda.com. Phone calls From the U.S., dial the international access code 001, the country code 886, the local code, and the number.

PLACES MENTIONED
Alishan House www.alishanhouse.com.tw/Index.asp
Alishan National Scenic Area www.ali.org.tw
Bunun Village www.bunun.org.tw
Fo Guang Shan Monastery www.fgs.org.tw/

Kenting National Park www.ktnp.gov.tw/eng/home/index.asp
National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall www outskirts.gov.tw/english
National Palace Museum www.npm.gov.tw
National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall 02-2343-1100-3; www.ntch.edu.tw
Sun Moon Lake www.sunmoonlake.gov.tw
Taipei http://english.taipe.gov.tw
Taroko National Park www.taroko.gov.tw

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Taiwan Government Information Office www.gio.gov.tw
Taiwan Tourism Bureau www.taiwan.net.tw

NUTS & BOLTS
Things to Know Before You Go

• When should I visit Taiwan? Perhaps the best times are March through May and mid-September through mid-November, when weather conditions are generally cool and dry. June through August tends to be steamy and subject to typhoons. Chinese New Year celebrations in January and February are popular vacation events for locals, driving up rates, crowding roads, and closing many businesses.

• Should I explore on my own or take a group tour? Group travel, popular among locals, is an easy way for first-time visitors to reach Taiwan’s top attractions. A number of outfitters offer package tours around Taiwan, including ones in English; for a list of packages and providers, log on to www.go2taiwan.net/tour_package.php. A somewhat pricier tour option is to hire a car and driver, which allows for an individualized itinerary— and last-minute alterations. Traveling on your own is a more adventurous option: The island’s network of trains and public buses links major sites, but note that most locals outside of Taipei know little English, and not all signage is in English. However, the Taiwanese are known for their hospitality and eagerness to help foreign visitors.

ONLINE
Best of Taiwan

• Learn about life in contemporary Taiwan in Lessons in Essence, a novel by Dana Standridge—just one of the great reads featured in our online Ultimate Travel Library, www.nationalgeographic.com/traveler/extras/travellibrary.html. • Learn where to buy wood carvings, silk wares, and other crafts around Taiwan in our Authentic Shopping Guide, www.nationalgeographic.com/traveler/extras/shoppingguide/shopping.html.
