

Thoughts on Packing

In General

Dress Code at School

-The dress code at Taiwanese schools tends to be much less formal than the dress code at schools in the United States. Basic shirts and pants are normally fine. Remember, though, that in an effort to be polite, others may tell you that it is okay to wear things that it really isn't okay to wear. So it's best to be a bit conservative at first until you see what others are wearing at your school. The key is to observe and communicate about expectations.

-Remember to bring at least one pair of closed toed shoes. Any sandal that doesn't have an ankle strap is considered a slipper here. Even if you paid a great deal of money for them, if they don't have an ankle strap, they're slippers. Generally, flip-flops are not appropriate for school.

-You can dress casually at school, but there are a few limitations on how casual you can dress. Skirts should be knee length (this is a general rule at most schools; perhaps talk with your co-teacher(s) and observe the way other teachers dress at your school). Shirts should not be revealing and long enough so that when you write on the board you won't expose too much.

-Especially when teaching the younger grades, you will probably move around a lot and will likely end up dancing and making lots of dramatic gestures, so its important to wear a shirt long enough for all of this activity.

-A few dressy outfits for formal FSE events.

Toiletries

-You will easily be able to find almost everything you need here to meet your basic standards of hygiene. Don't worry too much about stuffing your bag with toiletries. If you are very particular about certain brand name products, bring a year supply to be safe. On the other hand, if you aren't too particular, wait until you arrive here to purchase them. Taiwan has almost everything you'll need; so don't waste space on too many toiletries.

-Definitely bring your favorite feminine hygiene products because the Taiwan brands are not quite the same. Tampons are very hard to find here and the few I have seen are expensive, come in small packages, and don't have applicators.

-Deodorant: The selection here is pretty small and tends to be mostly the roll-on or spray-on type. Bringing a couple sticks of your favorite brand would probably be a good idea.

-Headache Medicine: While they do have various over-the-counter meds, I suggest bringing whatever works for you: ibuprofen, etc. Also, if you have seasonal allergies and use medication similar to Claritin D you might want to bring a year's supply as it is a controlled substance in Taiwan and therefore illegal to have it mailed to you from the United States.

-Vitamins. You will be able to find whatever vitamins you need here, but they will be more expensive than their American counterparts.

-You can't drink tap water here, but there are a lot of water machines with potable water. Instead of buying bottles of water, consider bringing a reusable bottle like a trusty Nalgene, or buying one here.

-Stationary stores in Taiwan are fully stocked with anything you could want for teaching materials. Your school and the Teacher Center also have plenty of teaching materials. So don't worry about bringing a lot of stuff with you from the United States

-Computer, necessary cords and possibly a back up power supply if you have a Dell. It would also be useful to bring a computer to AV/projector converter for Mac users since the cables don't plug in the same way here.

-Outlets are mostly standard American, but many are just two prong. Consider a three to two adaptor, although you can get it here if you have to. It might be easier from the start, though, just to have one.

I. For Yilan ETA

About Yilan

Yilan County, where 16 Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship grantees will be placed, has a population of about 400,000 people. Yilan City, the county seat, is a compact town of about 100,000; Luodong, the other major town in the county, is a commercial center

with a population similar to that of Yilan City. The county, about an hour's drive from Taipei by freeway, is a strip of land between mountains and the sea, known for its natural beauty and its environmental protection efforts. Like most Taiwan counties, Yilan is very different from what it used to be twenty or even ten years ago. In Yilan County, besides driving cars or using public transportation, local people ride bikes or scooters as means of transportation.

Two annual events—Yilan International Children's Folklore & Folk Game Festival and Yilan Green Exposition—have been very popular, drawing many visitors to the county. There are not only restaurants and food stands providing local food at reasonable prices, but also coffee shops, bakeries, and McDonald's. Turtle Island, an offshore islet, has recently become a tourist attraction—a destination for whale-watching eco-tours, which are available from March through October.

Clothes

-Bring rain gear! It rains A LOT here. It rains and rains and rains and rains until you think you will go crazy. You will be driving a scooter all year and, when it rains, you will get soaked. If possible, buy raincoats, rain boots, and rain pants before you leave the U.S. You can buy large overcoat raincoats for scootering once you arrive, but it's worth investing in quality raincoat/rain pants like those designed for backpacking.

-Clothes that dry quickly (without a dryer). During the rainy season it might take several days for your clothes to dry. As a result, mold can be a big problem. ETAs and their clothes/shoes have lost several battles with mold this year. You can invest in a dehumidifier once you get here but it's good to be selective about which nice clothing/shoes you bring from the U.S. so you can take better care of the things you have. You probably will not have regular access to a dryer or an iron and, without the dryer, your clothes will probably get pretty stretched out. So it's good to think low-maintenance.

-Lots of warm clothes (your house and school have no heating). Although it might not be particularly cold outside, you will not be used to the absence of heating in your home. Several ETAs recommend wool and fleece as materials that will dry quickly and keep you warm. It's also definitely worth investing in a pair of warm long-underwear (ex: EMS or REI to wear under your clothes).

-It is smart to think in layers. In the summer it is very hot and humid, but it is quite cold in the winter. Think about bringing some linen-based clothing.

-You will do a lot of scootering around Yilan. When it's not raining, it is nice to have some sort of windbreaker or sweater to keep the chill off.

-Swimsuit culture in Taiwan is rather conservative. While it is okay to wear bikinis, most other people at the beach will be donning one piece suits with shorts, or even long sleeve t-shirts and shorts. (Taiwanese women are scared of the sun.) For men, you'd fit right in if you packed a teeny, tiny speedo. This is not required, though, so you'll be fine in some trunks. At the hot springs, cold springs and any pool, you will also be required to wear a swim cap. You can get plenty of fabric ones here, but just a heads up.

Shoes

-If you do wear the same type of shoe a great deal, bring more than one pair so that you can rotate them and let them air out! This is especially true when it's rainy because your shoes may take a while to dry. Shoes, especially those made of leather, can mold if they aren't worn for a while.

-If you wear between a 5 and 8 in women's shoes, you won't have any problem finding shoes here. On the other hand, if your shoe size is larger than 8, you should probably bring all the shoes you'll need for a year.

-There are tons of great hiking and outdoor activity locations in Yilan, or just a train ride away. Hiking boots are probably not necessary, but a good pair of sneakers is highly recommended!

-A sturdy backpack or small duffel bag for weekend trips around Taiwan

-This isn't exactly an item to pack, but I think it's worth mentioning. Lots of people will be very interested in your family, your house, your hometown, etc. so make sure you have plenty of pictures of these things on your computer. I sometimes found myself thinking it would be nice if I had thought to take some pictures of my room, my yard, and other things around my house to show people here what my home is like.

-A sleeping bag would be very helpful if you plan to travel around Taiwan, especially if you want to do a lot of hiking. Keep in mind, though, that you can buy a sleeping bag at Carrefour in Yilan City pretty easily.

A few good books to read and share. The Teacher Center has a supply of books left by previous ETAs. Caves Books in Yilan City has a good selection of English-language books. And the Eslite bookstore in Taipei has a great selection. Books.co.tw is a great website where you can purchase English-language books online and have them shipped to the nearest 7-11.

II. For Kaohsiung ETA

About Kaohsiung City:

Due to Kaohsiung's industrial origins, there is a common misperception in Taiwan that it is a bit of a dirty backwater. However, in recent decades the Kaohsiung city government has made a lot of progress towards making the city greener and more modern. Although Kaohsiung doesn't have as much of a nightlife or as many tourist attractions as Taipei, it has a far more relaxed atmosphere, and on the whole it's quite a pleasant place to live. While northern and eastern Taiwan have rainy winters, Kaohsiung is beautifully sunny and temperate in the winter months, and it's the standard jumping-off point for trips to Kenting, Taiwan's most famous beach destination. Due in part to the more clement weather, scooters are the preferred form of transport over the bus network or the new subway system.

What you can wear to work:

Lightweight, breathable short-sleeved shirts are best; sleeveless is only okay if quite modest. Ladies, be especially careful about necklines! Taiwanese necklines are quite high in comparison to the States, and you'll find yourself doing a lot of bending over in the course of teaching, so make sure you won't be revealing anything! Dresses, skirts, and shorts shouldn't be any shorter than just above the knee. Open toed shoes are acceptable, but flip-flops in any form are not. If you wear between a 5 and 9 in women's shoes, you won't have any problem finding shoes here. On the other hand, if your shoe size is larger than 9, you should probably bring all the shoes you'll need for a year. Dress

expectations vary between schools – at many schools it's fine to wear jeans and T-shirts, but some schools expect more formal dress. Bring at least a week's worth of conservative work clothes to wear in the beginning while you test the waters.

Outside of work:

It's okay to dress mostly like you would in the States. You'll see Taiwanese girls wearing pretty short shorts, although spaghetti-straps, halter-tops, tube tops, and low-cut shirts are a rarity for daytime wear. This is probably partially due to modesty and partially due to fear of getting tan, but it doesn't hurt to play it safe. At the beach, you'll find that all of the girls have bikinis, but everybody wears surf shorts over them, and most wear tank tops as well. If you plan on swimming in a public pool, bring a one-piece.

As a Fulbright scholar, it's likely that you'll be invited to a few fancy dress events over the course of the year. Suits and dresses of all sizes can be purchased in Taiwan...or you can avoid the expense and just bring your own.

Also, as hot as it is in Kaohsiung most of the time, even southern Taiwan gets cool in the winter (lows of about 50F), and your work/apartment won't be heated, so bring some warmer clothing as well!

Personal care products:

It takes a little looking, but deodorant, shaving cream, and tampons are all available. However, they may be more expensive, and the selection is very small, so bring your own if you have a specific preference. Other personal products are more widely available.

Don't bother bringing:

-rain boots. Although it rains a lot, it's usually too hot for boots, just bring shoes that you don't mind getting wet instead (with good traction for slippery sidewalks!)

-a power converter. You can get Taiwanese power strips with holes for all sorts of plugs.

-silver jewelry. Silver tarnishes with amazing speed in Kaohsiung, so unless you polish it frequently, you won't be able to wear it long.

II. For Kinmen ETA

About Kinmen

The territory of Kinmen covers 15 big and small islands, including Kinmen proper, Leiyu, Dadan, Erdan, with a total area of 150 square kilometers. Under the influence of ocean in a subtropical monsoon climate, it registers high humidity with an average temperature of 21.1°C. Kinmen has been a battles zone for more than fifty years. Not until the end of 1992 when the martial law was lifted Kinmen stepped into new era of tourism industry. In this beginning of the 21th century, when the direct marine transportations between Kinmen and Xiamen started, Kinmen once again became the key role for cross-strait interaction. The natural ecological environmental in Kinmen is well protected under severe military control and owns white sandy shore, clear water, blue sky and hard rocks with variety shapes. In 1950s, islanders started to planted trees to beautify this island, covered the land with shadows of trees, and decorated roads with flowers. The beautiful and pleasant scenery earned Kinmen as “Park in the sea”.

Kinmen located in the southeastern coast of Mainland China, and is almost the only route must be passed by migrant birds. In recent years, when civil war across-straits appeased, plenty of foods, such as wheat in spring, sorghum in autumn, fishes, shrimps, and mussels along the coastline, have made Kinmen a paradise for various kinds of migrant birds.

What to bring:

Basically, the Kinmen are same with the other two ETA sites. Only, it is cooler in winter, the lowest temperature maybe 5 to 10 degree Celsius. So, please bring more warm clothes and coats, since it is windy in Kinmen. You may bring rain gears as well, although it does not rain as hard as in Yilan. You also can bring more outdoor activity equipments for bird watching, water activities and hiking scooter diving etc. to explore Kinmen. Please bring your own personal products and medicine which are not easily to purchase in Taiwan.