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## **Latest news from The Taiwan Tourism Bureau**

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### **1. China Airlines to launch first UK to Taiwan non-stop flights**

From 28<sup>th</sup> March 2010, China Airlines will launch the first non-stop flights to Taipei from London Heathrow, Terminal 4. The new service will operate three times a week and will offer 30 business class seats and 246 seats in economy class. Previously, UK passengers have had to travel via Amsterdam in order to fly to Taiwan with China Airlines.

Flights to Taiwan will depart from London Heathrow Terminal 4 at 21:15 on Tuesdays and Sundays, arriving at Tayoyuan International Airport at 18:15 the following day. Thursday services will depart slightly later at 22:05 and will arrive in Taiwan at 19:05 the following day.

Return flights from London Heathrow to Taipei start from £585 in low season, including taxes.

[www.china-airlines.com](http://www.china-airlines.com)

### **2. Events and festivals to light up Taiwan in 2010**

Taiwan is famed for its events and festivals throughout the year. Here's a selection of the island's top attractions in 2010:

- Lantern Festival, 28<sup>th</sup> February – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2010, nationwide**

This 'second New Year', which forms the final celebrations of the traditional Chinese Lunar New Year, is celebrated throughout Taiwan with towns and villages putting on beautiful displays of decorative lanterns depicting birds, beasts and historical figures.

Lanterns are carried by children in processions, used to decorate temples and light up family homes. The Lantern Festival is themed according to the animal of the Chinese zodiac representing that year - 2010 is the Year of the Tiger.

Festivities in the large cities such as Taipei can last up to five days. Traditional themes are celebrated with modern technology such as laser light shows, fireworks and robotics, producing dramatic shows and drawing huge crowds.

- **Dragon Boat Festival, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010, nationwide**

Together with Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival is one of Taiwan's three major annual holidays. Because of its origins and customs, it is related to the remembrance of Cyuyuan, a poet in the Warring States Period, who tried to commit suicide by drowning himself in a river to protest against the cruel government.

Legend has it that when the poet jumped to his death into the river, the local people rowed their boats to and fro in search of him. This slowly evolved into the dragon boat races. Today, dragon boat races are a popular activity.

Each year, most local areas in Taiwan hold their own races. For example, the Taipei Dragon Boat Festival will be taken place at Dajia Riverside Park from 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May 2009. During the Festival, there are dragon boat races and spectators eat glutinous rice dumplings called zongzih.

- **Ghost Festival, 1<sup>st</sup> August – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2010, Keelung**

The Ghost Festival combines the Buddhist Ullambana (deliverance) Festival and the Taoist Ghost Festival, both of which honour dead spirits. The seventh lunar month is known as 'ghost month' and each year a different Keelung clan is chosen to sponsor it.

Highlights of the event include folk-art performances, the opening of the gates of hell and the release of burning water lanterns. At this time, families make offerings to their ancestors and ghosts of the underworld. The festival takes place in the large port town of Keelung, just outside Taipei. Keelung is also renowned for having some of the best nightmarkets for food in the country.

- **11<sup>th</sup> Taroko Gorge Marathon – 6<sup>th</sup> November 2010, Taroko Gorge**

The Taroko International Marathon, said to be the world's only marathon held at a gorge in a mountainous area, takes place at Taiwan's scenic Taroko National Park. This annual event draws thousands of long-distance runners from all over the world, offering participants the chance to tour through the winding roads of the majestic marble-walled Taroko Gorge.

Athletes can opt to compete in a full or half distance marathon, or in fun runs of just a few kilometres. During the run, runners will pass lofty mountains,

deep canyons that cut off from the main gorge, head-spinning precipices, elegant waterfalls and wild rapids.

- **Taipei International Flora Expo, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2010 – 25<sup>th</sup> April 2011, Taipei**

This year, Taiwan's vibrant capital, Taipei, will transform into a garden city as it hosts the Taipei International Flora Exposition for the very first time. Over six million tourists are expected to attend the Expo, which will showcase Taiwan's achievements in horticulture, science and environmental technology to the theme of 'Rivers, Flowers, New Horizons'.

The Taipei International Flora Expo will be held in a newly built exhibition centre with 14 halls spread across an area of 91.8 hectares in four parks: Yuanshan Park, Taipei Fine Arts Park, Xincheng Park and Da-jia Riverside Park. Events, floral displays and exhibitions will be held at some of Taipei's most celebrated cultural and artistic attractions, including the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.

[www.taiwan.net.tw](http://www.taiwan.net.tw)

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For more information on Taiwan, please see [www.taiwan.net.tw](http://www.taiwan.net.tw) or telephone 020 7928 1600.

For media information and image or if you're interested in visiting Taiwan on an individual or group press trip, please contact Susie Tempest or Sarah Habicht at the Saltmarsh Partnership on 020 7928 1600 or email [susie@saltmarshpr.co.uk](mailto:susie@saltmarshpr.co.uk) / [sarah@saltmarshpr.co.uk](mailto:sarah@saltmarshpr.co.uk).