



Urban alley vistas

Discovering Taichung's past and present during a Calligraphy Greenway stroll

Sponsored by Hao Hsi
 Words by Maylan Lin
 Translated by Anna Yang
 Photography by Reflection Photography

A meandering exploration is the best way to become acquainted with a city. Along the Calligraphy Greenway, starting from the entrance of the of the Natural Museum of Natural Science, both sides are lined with international restaurants whose exotic settings conjure up feelings of traveling abroad. As you walk along nearby streets and alleys, visiting a number of old houses converted into extraordinary stores, and savoring a variety of classic small local delicacies, you will fully experience the beauty and appealing quality of life in this city. There's no better way than a walk on and around the Calligraphy Greenway to discover Taichung's past and present.

Wen-Shan Lai, owner of a Nordic-style furniture store, moved her shop from Taipei to Taichung six years ago. She enjoys slow strolls that allow her to observe life in Taichung, including frequent walks along streets near Calligraphy Greenway, where she has come to the realization that the beauty of life in this city is hidden along local alleyways.

Afternoon enjoyment by the Science Museum

Calligraphy Greenway ("Cao Wu Dao" in Chinese) is a verdant belt that stretches along the old Tuku River, which was later covered with the greenway. Stretching from the Natural Museum of Natural Science to the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, it is nearly four kilometers long, combining ordinary and creative living environments while also serving as a pathway for science and the arts. Walking by restaurants overflowing with creative and exotic atmospheres on both sides of the green belt and

nearby streets is like taking a trip around the world.

As Lai shares her Taichung living experiences, she notes that the Calligraphy Greenway is certainly filled with an abundance of interesting stories, adding that, when arriving in a new city, walking the streets to sense its feeling and trying its many eateries is the first step toward becoming a local resident.

By the front of the Science Museum, a local eatery, The Science Museum Dumpling, open from 2 p.m. offers a wide selection of dumplings, deep-fried sub sandwiches, taro buns, and radish buns. All of snacks at this half-century-old eatery are filled with the tasty old-style flavors, consistently drawing hungry crowds to the premises. After grabbing a bite, you can enjoy a nice afternoon walk on the dinosaur and art engraved pathway that follows GuanQian Road, passing the grand-looking Caves Bookstore, which has been among Taichung's most popular book retailers for the past two decades.

Urban alleyway explorations

As you walk along the greenway near Park Lane by CMP shopping mall, between Hotel National and Civic Square, you'll encounter plenty of local residents and visitors. On weekdays, the locals come here for recreation



1. Bookstore For Beginners
 2. 3. Washida HOME STORE, a Japanese select fine-clothing shop
 4. The Calligraphy Greenway



Tour guide: Wen-Shan Lai

This designer once worked for a commercial company in Taipei and also previously ran a cafe. Six years ago, she opened a Nordic-style furniture boutique store in Taichung's Shengping community. She likes to walk around and enjoy a great lifestyle, and her store is named after this hobby with "San Bu Pu" literally meaning the "walking shop".

and shopping, also enjoying leisure time in the mall's Eslite Bookstore and CMP Block Museum of Arts. During weekends, this area takes on a street fair ambiance, filling with tourists, who come for street market events, street artists and a global variety of cuisine.

Leaving the crowds behind, you come to Lane 117 of MeiCun Road, where old houses have been converted into industrial-style shops, all part of the Fantasy redevelopment project created in 2011. The main focus has been on renovating the old structures to promote an environment with afforestation and clustering a variety of micro-businesses in these buildings to breathe fresh life into this area.

As you walk from the Mollie used-books store to ZhongXing Street and continue south along the green expanse of Civic Square, you'll arrive at crossroads with XiangShang North Road, where there's the "Bookstore For Beginners". This store is part of Fantasy's second redevelopment plan, established in 2013, and blends the concepts of a bookstore, traditional production methods, and community reading habits. The Fantasy project extends onto Lane 1 of ZhongXing Street, where there's another cluster of old houses converted into striking stores. These neighborhoods impress many



1. The Taiwanese food stall near National Museum of Natural Science



2. Delicious filling red bean wheel pies

3. For Farm Burger (Gongzheng alley branch)



3

visitors with their ability to push the boundaries of the imagination along hidden city lanes.

Walking through this quiet and peaceful community, Lai comes to Washida—a Japanese select fine-clothing shop originally from Tainan—on Lane 4 of ZhongXing Street. An added gallery/exhibition space and cafe on the same floor are not found at the Tainan branch. A simple and bleached-looking space extends to a tiny backyard, while the inner part of the converted store provides another ambiance. The logo on the luminous wall was designed by Japanese illustrator Noritake. The eye-catching wall drawing store logo is simple and backed by an abundance of white space, making it feel as if it were a random sketch by the neighbor child. Opened for less than a year, this store's fresh and unassuming flavor has already allowed it to blend into its surroundings.

"There's a restaurant with a staircase as its entrance; this amazing design features a narrow stairway being sticks out from the next-door building and leads customers upwards to a restaurant," says Lai as she introduces For Farm Burger (Gongzheng Alley branch), opened earlier this year. She likes the plant space and patio of the interior design here, a natural space that is completely illuminated by sunlight and creates a peaceful setting that segregates from the the

busy roads outside.

Taichung is a living city, with harmonious happenings along its street and alleys, perfect for a downtown "treasure hunt".

Friendliness of the city

Youthful-feeling markets and stores are characteristic of the development around Calligraphy Greenway, as a new style of city living emerges. Lai suggests another famous local location on the opposite side of MeiCun Road, near the traditional Xiangshang Market.

Along busy MeiCun Road, a long line of customers waiting to purchase Peking duck can usually be seen. Lai says that this store is familiar to many Taichung locals; for the past six years, there's always been a line every time she visits for some savory duck slices encased in a tender wrapper. Such classic old flavors continue to be a benefit for the residents of Taichung.

Xiangshang Market itself is the source of many tempting foods and Lai believes that many longstanding, nameless vendors are the best options. For instance, Zhiyang Sponge Cake has been around for 30 years. Its pastries, commonly used in the worship of traditional deities, have also become popular souvenir snacks. Across from the bakery, a vendor selling egg pancakes on ZhongMei Street also does an excellent business. Lai notes that the texture of these treats is firm and chewy. There is a maximum purchase of 10 pancakes, but their addicting flavor is completely worth a wait in a long line.

Older businesses are among the best discoveries in a city, as the long lines in front of nameless long-standing market vendors show—a part of the timeless flow of life in Taichung.

Community life in the city

As the greenway follows YingCai Road and approaches the Art Museum the crowds thin out. Here, various kinds of trees see leaves change colors with the passage of seasons, with colorful ebony blossoms making this forest feel more lively. Lai often walks along tree-lined pathways to the museum with visiting Taipei friends. "There are different routes to the museum, but I prefer taking friends to along green paths; we want to appreciate the beauty of nature and enjoy the quality life of Taichung," she says. "Isn't the entire row of Taiwanese flame gold trees with changing leaves a great view for enjoying well-marked seasons?" There are tons of reasons to reside in Taichung and a diversity of natural attractions is among the best.

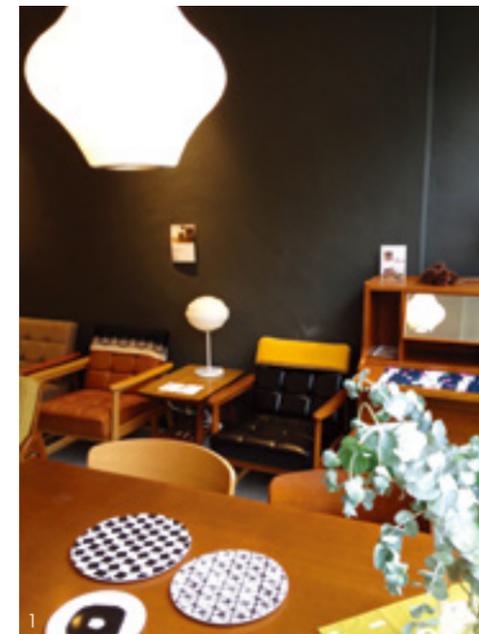
The two communities adjacent to the greenway—Tuku and Shengping—are quiet and peaceful and the specialty stores hidden along alleys here usually inspire passersby to stop, turn around and take a look.

Tuku has been home to many exotic restaurants for quite some time and the streets are filled with a romantic atmosphere, heightened more recently by a growing number of popular micro-businesses found in old houses transformed into stylish stores. The air is also filled with art and literature as many artists made these sites into art studios and exhibition venues, so that a stroll here can resemble a visit to an art fair.

Shen Ji New Village is gradually being filled by a variety of cultural and creative stores, occupying the old converted residences of Shengping community and drawing growing number of visitors. Lai notes with a laugh, "Although it is more crowded here, most of the visitors here are residents and business owners nearby. Also, if you're new to this place, it usually takes some time to locate a specific store by its number plate."

Lai's own business, a Nordic-style furniture store, Chairs and Cafe, is located at a house on Alley 66, Lane 79, XiangShang Road, Sec. 1 and features simple decor providing a relaxed vibe. When she was looking for a location six years ago, she walked into this alleyway and decided to open shop here. The low-key, yet authentic, decor easily complements neighboring houses. Although many visitors are surprised to find a store operating successfully here, further additional specialty stores have gradually opened around it. For instance, a young artistic manager wanting to discover local artists opened the Yami Art Space studio. Nearby, Woodwork 30 Plus exclusively sells limited-edition furniture, as the owner also restores old furniture into a new works of art. A tiny, cozy florist shop, stores selling local products, and Japanese grocery shops are all expected to open here. As Lai remarks, "The alleyways here are filled with crafts makers and the aromas of cooking and coffee. We know how to live."

"Let's go and get some filling red bean wheel pies! But there's a line!" Lai says, as if guiding a tour. 🍡



1



2



3



4

1. San Bu Pu, a Nordic-style furniture boutique store
2. A tree-lined pathway leading to the Art Museum
3. 4. Washida HOME STORE