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Moving to Taiwan

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Introduction

Welcome to "Moving to Taiwan: A Comprehensive Guide to Moving to Taiwan," your ultimate companion for embarking on a new adventure in this vibrant and culturally rich island nation. This guide is your one-stop resource for everything you need to know about moving to Taiwan, focusing solely on the practical details that matter to expatriates ready to make the leap. Skip the generic tips about moving abroad because we're diving straight into the nitty-gritty specifics of what it takes to relocate to Taiwan.

Why Taiwan, you ask? Picture an island where tradition meets innovation—a place where stunning mountains touch the sky and bustling night markets enchant your taste buds. Taiwan offers a high quality of life, blending modern conveniences with a unique cultural tapestry woven through centuries of history. From its top-notch healthcare system and thriving economy to the warm hospitality of its people, Taiwan beckons with open arms.

We'll kick things off with the essential visas and residency information you'll need to legally plant your roots in Taiwan. Navigating the bureaucracy is much easier when you've got the right road map. Rest assured, we've got anecdotes and insights sprinkled along the way to keep things light and engaging, with no uncomfortable preaching or sermonizing in sight.

While this guide provides a comprehensive foundation, it's pivotal to remember that laws, regulations, and prices are in a constant state of flux. Think of this book as your trusty compass, pointing you in the right direction. Always double-check with official sources to ensure you're up-to-date with the latest guidelines and requirements.

Forget about assuming you'll find the same everyday details you would anywhere else. We've ditched the generalities and honed in on what it genuinely means to live the Taiwan way—from renting a cozy apartment in Taipei to savoring street food delights and deciphering Taiwan's employment landscape. So strap in and get ready for an informative, humorous journey through everything you need to know about becoming a bona fide Taiwan local.

Let the adventure begin!

CHAPTER ONE: Visas and Residency

Alright, let's talk about the first hurdle, the big gatekeeper, the bureaucratic beast you need to charm to get your foot in the door of your new Taiwanese life: the visa. Before you can worry about mastering chopsticks, deciphering MRT maps, or developing an unhealthy obsession with pineapple cakes, you need official permission to actually stick around longer than a tourist. Think of this chapter as your diplomatic passport to understanding diplomatic paperwork. It's not always glamorous, occasionally confusing, and sometimes feels like assembling flat-pack furniture designed by Kafka, but it's absolutely essential.

First things first: a crucial disclaimer, which we'll probably repeat because it's that important. The rules of the visa game can change faster than Taipei weather in spring. A policy tweak here, a new document requirement there - it happens. Consider this guide your knowledgeable friend offering solid advice based on common practice, but *always*, always, *always* double-check the latest, most accurate information directly from the official sources. Your primary ports of call will be Taiwan's Bureau of Consular Affairs (BOCA), the National Immigration Agency (NIA), and the specific Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) or representative office in your home country where you'll likely be submitting your application. Seriously, bookmark their websites now. Treat their word as gospel, and this book as the helpful sermon notes.

Now, let's clear up a common point of confusion. Many nationalities can enter Taiwan visa-exempt for short stays, typically up to 90 days, for tourism or short business trips. That's great for a holiday, but it's *not* the golden ticket for moving here. If your grand plan involves working, studying long-term, joining family, or generally becoming part of the Taiwanese furniture for more than a few months, you'll need a proper visa - usually a **Resident Visa**. This is the type of visa you apply for *before* you leave home, which grants you permission to enter Taiwan for the purpose of applying for your long-term residency permit, the Alien Resident Certificate (ARC), once you arrive. Think of the Resident Visa as your entry pass to the main event; the ARC is your season ticket. We'll tackle the joys of the ARC in the next chapter, but first, you need to get through the door.

The path you take depends entirely on *why* you're moving. Are you coming for a job? To study the elegant complexities of Mandarin? To launch the next big bubble tea franchise? Or perhaps to join a loved one who's already navigated this maze? Let's break down the most common scenarios and the visas that go with them.

The Classic Route: The Employer-Sponsored Work Visa

This is the bread-and-butter visa for many expats. If a company in Taiwan wants to hire you, this is likely your path. The process typically starts *after* you've landed the job offer. Congratulations, someone thinks you're awesome! Now, they need to convince the Taiwanese government of that, too. Your prospective employer usually takes the first step by applying for a **Work Permit** on your behalf from the Ministry of Labor (MOL).

This often involves the company demonstrating that they couldn't find a suitable local candidate for the position. Yes, you might need to be a uniquely qualified snowflake, or at least, the company needs to present a compelling case for why they need your specific foreign talents. This "labor market test" can sometimes feel a bit arbitrary, but it's a standard part of the process for many roles. Don't take it personally; it's just bureaucracy doing its thing. The specific requirements vary depending on the industry and the job level – specialized professionals might have an easier time than those in more general roles.

Once the MOL grants the Work Permit approval (hooray!), that document becomes your key piece of evidence. You'll take that approval letter, along with your passport, completed visa application forms, photos adhering to specific requirements (get used to strict photo specs!), and potentially other documents like your degree certificates or proof of relevant work experience, to the TECO or representative office in your country. They will review everything and, fingers crossed, issue you a **Work-Based Resident Visa**.

This visa usually allows you to enter Taiwan once within a certain period (often three months). Upon arrival, you typically have a very specific timeframe – often just 15 or 30 days – to trot down to the National Immigration Agency (NIA) and apply for your Alien Resident Certificate (ARC). Don't dawdle on this! The Resident Visa's primary job is to get you *in* legally so you can apply for the thing that lets you *stay*.

The documentation requirements can feel extensive. You might need health checks, authenticated diplomas, or letters of previous employment. Each TECO office might have slightly different preferences or interpretations, so checking their specific website or contacting them directly is paramount. Patience is a virtue here; gathering documents, waiting for approvals, and navigating potential requests for more information is all part of the initiation ritual.

The VIP Lane: The Employment Gold Card

Now, if you happen to be a hotshot in certain fields, Taiwan might just roll out the red carpet for you with the **Employment Gold Card**. Launched to attract high-level foreign talent, this card is a sleek, four-in-one pass that combines your work permit, Resident Visa, ARC, and re-entry permit into a single piece of plastic fantastic. It's

designed for professionals in specific areas like science and technology, economy, education, culture and arts, finance, law, and architecture. Think semiconductor gurus, AI wizards, award-winning artists, financial strategists, legal eagles, and visionary architects.

The beauty of the Gold Card lies in its flexibility. Unlike the traditional work visa, you don't need a specific job offer *before* you apply. You apply based on your qualifications and experience within one of the designated fields. If approved, you can arrive in Taiwan and *then* look for a job, work for multiple employers part-time, freelance, or even start your own business without needing separate permissions for each activity. It offers significantly more freedom and less employer dependency than the standard route.

Applying for the Gold Card is generally done online through a dedicated portal. You'll need to provide substantial evidence of your achievements and qualifications within your chosen field – think salary thresholds, patents, proof of holding senior positions, significant publications, awards, etc. The criteria are quite specific and vary by field, so a thorough read of the official Gold Card website is essential to see if you might qualify and what evidence is needed.

The Gold Card is typically valid for one to three years and can be renewed. It also offers perks like potentially faster paths to permanent residency (the APCR, which we'll discuss in Chapter 3) and allows your spouse and minor children to apply for dependent residency without the usual six-month wait for National Health Insurance eligibility after they get their ARCs.

However, it's not a universal pass. The eligibility requirements are genuinely aimed at high-level professionals or those with specialized skills deemed valuable to Taiwan's development. If you don't fit neatly into one of the designated categories and meet the specific criteria, the traditional work visa might still be your necessary route. But if you *do* qualify, the Gold Card can significantly streamline your move and offer unparalleled flexibility once you arrive. It's Taiwan saying, "We recognize your awesome skills, come on over and do your thing."

Hitting the Books: The Student Visa

Perhaps your reason for moving is academic. Taiwan has excellent universities and is a world-renowned destination for learning Mandarin Chinese. If you've been accepted into a degree program or a recognized language center for a substantial period (usually longer than six months), you'll need a **Student Resident Visa**.

The process usually starts after you receive your official acceptance letter from the educational institution. This letter is your golden ticket for the visa application. You'll apply at the TECO in your home country, providing the acceptance letter, proof of

financial means to support yourself (they want to know you can afford tuition and living costs), your passport, application forms, photos, and potentially a health certificate and study plan.

Similar to the work visa, the Student Resident Visa allows you entry into Taiwan. Once you arrive and complete your registration at the school, you'll need to apply for your ARC at the NIA within the stipulated timeframe. Your ARC validity will generally be tied to your period of study, often issued for six months or a year at a time, requiring renewal if your program continues.

It's important to be aware of working restrictions on a student visa. While regulations have become slightly more flexible over the years, typically, you need to have studied for a certain period (e.g., one year, or completed a certain amount of language study) before you can apply for a part-time work permit. There are limits on the number of hours you can work per week, particularly during term time. The primary purpose of your stay is study, and the visa reflects that. So, don't plan on funding your entire degree through part-time work from day one; ensure you have sufficient funds as required for the visa application.

The Bold Move: The Entrepreneur Visa

Got a brilliant business idea and dream of launching it in Taiwan? The **Entrepreneur Visa** might be for you. This visa caters to foreigners planning to establish a startup in Taiwan. It's designed to attract innovative business ventures, particularly in designated strategic industries.

This isn't a visa for the faint of heart or the light of wallet. You'll typically need a comprehensive business plan outlining your venture, its market potential, innovation aspects, and financial projections. You'll also need to demonstrate access to sufficient capital, either through personal funds, venture capital backing, or meeting specific criteria related to incubation centers or government recognition. The application involves scrutiny by relevant government agencies to assess the viability and potential contribution of your proposed business.

If your plan passes muster, you'll be issued an Entrepreneur Resident Visa to enter Taiwan. Upon arrival, you'll apply for your ARC, which is initially granted for a shorter period, often one year. Continued residency depends on achieving certain business milestones, such as reaching specific revenue targets, hiring local employees, or securing further funding, as outlined in the regulations.

This route requires significant preparation, a solid business concept, and the financial resources to back it up. It reflects Taiwan's interest in fostering innovation but also ensures that visa holders are genuinely committed to building a viable business. It's an exciting option for those with the right vision and resources, but requires

considerably more upfront effort and investment than other visa categories.

Bringing the Crew: The Dependent Visa

You're not moving alone? Fantastic! Taiwan generally makes provisions for the immediate family members of those holding valid resident status (like through a Work Visa, Gold Card, or Student Visa). The **Dependent Visa** is typically available for legal spouses and unmarried minor children (usually under 18, though exceptions exist for adult children with disabilities who are unable to live independently).

The process for dependents often runs parallel to or follows the main applicant's. If you're all applying from your home country at the same time, you'll submit everyone's applications together. The dependents will need to provide proof of their relationship to the main visa holder - typically marriage certificates for spouses and birth certificates for children. A crucial point: these documents often need to be officially authenticated or apostilled in your home country and sometimes translated into Chinese, so start gathering and preparing these well in advance. Check the specific requirements of the TECO you're dealing with.

If the main applicant is already in Taiwan and has their ARC, dependents might apply for their Resident Visas from abroad and then join them, or in some cases (depending on the main applicant's visa type and nationality regulations), they might be able to enter Taiwan on a visitor visa or visa-exempt status and then apply to change to a resident visa *within* Taiwan, subsequently applying for their ARCs. The latter route requires careful checking of NIA regulations, as it's not universally applicable.

The validity of a dependent's ARC is usually tied directly to the main applicant's ARC. If the main applicant's residency ends, the dependents' status typically ends too unless they qualify for residency in their own right. Dependents on regular work-visa based ARCs usually face restrictions on working themselves, though pathways exist to apply for their own work permits if they find sponsoring employers. Spouses of Gold Card holders often have more flexibility regarding work rights.

The Nitty-Gritty: General Application Tips

Regardless of the visa type, there are some common threads. As mentioned, you'll almost always apply at a TECO or equivalent representative office *outside* of Taiwan. Find the one responsible for your region - their website is your new best friend. Download the correct application forms, pay close attention to the photo specifications (wrong size or background color can lead to rejection!), and meticulously gather all supporting documents listed for your specific visa category.

Processing times can vary wildly. Some visas might take a few weeks, others a month or two, or even longer if additional checks or interviews are required. The golden rule

is: apply as early as possible once you have the necessary core documents (like that job offer or acceptance letter). Don't book non-refundable flights assuming your visa will appear magically on schedule.

Expect fees. Visa application fees are standard practice globally, and Taiwan is no exception. The cost varies depending on your nationality, the visa type, and the specific office. Check the fee schedule beforehand.

Ah, the health check. Most Resident Visa applicants need one. This isn't just a quick chat with your GP. It typically needs to be done within the last three months by a hospital or clinic designated or approved by the Taiwanese authorities in your country. If there isn't a designated list for your country, check with the TECO for guidance; sometimes a certified report from any licensed physician is acceptable, but often it needs specific tests done. Requirements usually include a general physical examination, a chest X-ray (for tuberculosis), and blood tests (sometimes including syphilis and occasionally HIV, though regulations on this can evolve). For certain visas or situations, you might be allowed to do the health check *after* arriving in Taiwan at a designated local hospital before your ARC application, but clarify this with the TECO beforehand. Get the required form from the TECO or BOCA website beforehand, as the hospital needs to fill out that specific document.

The Handover: From Visa to ARC

So, you've navigated the TECO, charmed the visa officers, got the stamp in your passport – congratulations! You board the plane, land at Taoyuan International Airport (or perhaps Kaohsiung or Songshan), take a deep breath of that humid subtropical air, and... well, the journey isn't quite over. Remember that Resident Visa? Its main job was getting you here. Now, within that tight timeframe (usually 15 or 30 days, check your visa sticker!), you need to take the next critical step: applying for your Alien Resident Certificate (ARC) at your local National Immigration Agency (NIA) office. That little card will become your primary ID in Taiwan, the key to opening bank accounts, getting a phone plan, joining the National Health Insurance, and generally proving you're allowed to be here long-term.

But fear not, we'll dive headfirst into the wonders and ways of the ARC in the very next chapter. For now, pat yourself on the back for conquering the visa stage – arguably the biggest bureaucratic hurdle in the entire moving process. Getting that initial permission is a major milestone. Just remember to keep those official websites handy, double-check everything, embrace the paperwork shuffle with as much zen as you can muster, and maybe reward yourself with some bubble tea once that visa sticker is firmly in your passport.

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