

## Election tour showcases democracy

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
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When Taiwanese and Hong Kong tour agencies began offering a four-day package tour focusing on Taiwan's election culture, spaces sold out quickly. As there were only 30 seats available, and given that elections and democracy in Taiwan are especially relevant to people in Hong Kong at this moment due to pro-democracy protests in the territory, the popularity of the tour is not surprising.

What is interesting is that according to yesterday's report by the *Taipei Times*, the tour is not just about the elections — but also presenting a brief overview of how Taiwan got to this point from an authoritarian military state. In addition to attending political rallies and watching election results live on TV, the tourists are also to learn about the nation's history of social and political movements, and visit the Jingmei Human Rights Memorial and Cultural Park.

While it is unlikely that someone without any special interest in the topic would come all the way from, say, Europe, just to spend their entire time learning about Taiwanese election politics — which could be quite entertaining if presented in a humorous way — the tour is still a wonderful idea that could be incorporated into an itinerary in Taiwan over the next month.

Those who are used to the nation's election frenzy might forget how unique Taiwan's situation is in Asia. People should be proud of what Taiwan has accomplished in terms of freedom and human rights in such a short time. The election culture, precisely due to how crazy it can get, is a testament to this. For example, there have been LGBT+ tours to show visitors the landmarks and events that finally made Taiwan the first nation in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage, so election tours would make sense.

Tourists could be taken to the National 228 Memorial Museum or other sites to understand the White Terror era and Taiwan's not-so-glorious past and transition to democracy, but spending perhaps just a day personally experiencing its intense election culture is a concrete and tangible way to understand the nation's values and the freedom its people enjoy. There are less than three weeks to go before the elections, but people will still be visiting Taiwan and they should be encouraged to see what is going on.

At least it is much better than continuing to rely on gimmicky installations for the sole purpose of selfie-taking. These sites continue to pop up nationwide and add little value to understanding anything about Taiwan, likely drawing only local tourists and deeply disappointing foreigners.

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Tourism is changing fast and there have been many efforts by tour companies to offer more meaningful experiences, with the election tour's "Walk in Taiwan" being a prime example.

However, its Web site shows that, while including intriguing destinations such as Taipei's former and current red-light districts, as well as early-morning wholesale markets, most of the tour is cultural. Taiwan's politics and road to democracy are what have made this nation, and while there are excellent museums and exhibits about its recent history, this part seems somewhat understated when advertising to tourists.

Taiwan is a beautiful nation with vibrant cultures, and that would still be the main draw. However, experiences like election tours are key to understanding Taiwan's current affairs, which is what it desperately needs in the face of Chinese oppression.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2019/12/25](#)