

# Matsu in motion

Some might think walking 300km in eight days is something one would want to do only once, if at all.

But not Wu Yi-min (吳伊敏).

Wu, along with thousands of others, plans to make a pilgrimage, which starts on Sunday at 11pm at the Jenn Lann Temple (鎮瀾宮) in Tachia (大甲), Taichung County, as an act of devotion to Matsu, one of the country's most revered deities.

"Last year I attended the entire eight days and will do so again this year," said Wu, whose father is Jenn Lann's managing director. "You might feel tired physically ... but you will feel excited because lots of things are going on."

One of Taiwan's largest annual religious festivals, the pilgrimage of Tachia Matsu (大甲媽祖) sees devotees carry Jenn Lann Temple's Matsu statue on a palanquin for more than 300km from its home to the Tienfeng Temple (奉天宮) in Hsinkang (新港), Chiayi County, and back again.

According to Wu, more than a million people showed up last year to what she said is the third-largest religious activity in the world.

Though the numbers Wu gives are anecdotal, there is no doubt that the pilgrimage attracts a huge following — one she suspects will grow this year due to the economic downturn and rising unemployment.

"People will come to the pilgrimage and pray for luck," she said.

More than a million devotees participated in the Tachia Matsu pilgrimage last year, organizers say.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JENN LANN TEMPLE

Participants can expect the pious to offer them free food and drinks along the way because it is a way for residents "to pay back the kindness of Matsu," Wu said, though she added that there might be less charity this year because of the bad economy.

The procession comprises a series of palanquins from temples throughout the country that ferry Matsu and other senior Taoist deities through the rice fields and small villages of central-west Taiwan. The idols are accompanied by performing groups like the Eight Generals (八家將), martial lictors, entranced shamans, traditional musicians and dance troupes, all of which flock to the region to show off their piety.

In addition to the pilgrims who make the journey, devotees line the country roads and kneel to allow Matsu's palanquin to pass over them — a ritual that is said to bring peace and good fortune for the coming year.

Though Wu will follow the procession for eight days, there are no rules stating that a person can't participate for only a day or two. Wu said the best days to go are the first day, when Matsu is brought out of the temple (tomorrow at 11am); the fourth day, which is her official birthday; and the final day, when village gangs have been known to fight their way to the front of the crowd to protect Matsu as she is returned to her temple.

— NOAH BUCHAN



## TACHIA MATSU PILGRIMAGE:

Departure from Jenn Lann Temple, Tachia, Taichung County at 11pm on Sunday

**DAY ONE (SUNDAY):** Overnight at Nanyao Temple, Changhua City (彰化市南瑤宮)

**DAY TWO (MONDAY):** Overnight at Fuhsing Temple, Siluo Township (西螺鎮福興宮)

**DAY THREE (TUESDAY):** Overnight at Fengtien Temple, Singang Township (新港鄉奉天宮)

**DAY FOUR (WEDNESDAY):** Main blessing ceremony at 8am, overnight at Fengtien Temple, Singang Township (新港鄉奉天宮)

**DAY FIVE (THURSDAY):** Overnight at Fuhsing Temple, Siluo Township (西螺鎮福興宮)

**DAY SIX (MARCH 27):** Overnight at Chengan Temple, Beidou Townshio (北斗鎮安宮)

**DAY SEVEN (MARCH 28):** Overnight at

Tienhou

Temple,

Changhua City

(彰化市天后宮)

**Day Eight (March 29):** Return to Jenn Lann Temple, Tachia Township (大甲鎮瀾宮)

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

Temples offer rudimentary accommodation for pilgrims. Water and vegetarian food are provided for free by temples and believers along the route. To learn more, go to Jenn Lann Temple's Web site at [www.dajiamazu.org.tw](http://www.dajiamazu.org.tw).

Extensive information in English and Chinese about the history and ceremonies of the pilgrimage can be found on the Taichung County Government's Web site at [mazu.taichung.gov.tw](http://mazu.taichung.gov.tw).

(all-you-can-drink)

► B1, 67, Roosevelt Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路二段67號B1)

## Deep Passion

► Wednesdays to Saturdays, NT\$200 to NT\$700

► B1, 217, Nanjing E Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市南京東路三段217號B1)

## 9%

A small, two-level establishment in the Shida area next to Roxy 99. Open since 2006.

► Mondays to Sundays, NT\$200 to NT\$600

► B1, 222, Jinshan S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市金山南路二段222號B1)

► www.9club.com.tw

## Babe 18

A "lite" version of Room 18 with a much younger following.

► B1, 18, Songshou Rd, Taipei City (台北市松壽路18號B1)

► www.room18.com.tw/babe18

## DV8

DV8 is the newest club in town and it's run by the "king of night market hard house," DJ Jerry (羅百吉). Lately it's been the hotspot for after-hours clubbers on Sunday mornings when electro house (instead of "Taiwanese techno") is on offer.

► Wednesdays to Saturdays, NT\$299 to NT\$500. The after-hours bash is not

all-you-can-drink

► 249, Fuxing S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市復興南路一段249號B1)

**NOTE:** The above admission prices are provided for reference only. Check with the club for the cost of entry.

**WARNING:** Excessive consumption of alcohol can damage your health and make you sleep with ugly people.

— QUEEN BEE

## All-you-can-drink (or should that be drink-all-you-can?) venues

Almost all of these all-you-can-drink dance clubs play a similar kind of music — Top 40 hip-hop, pop and R 'n' B, and often use dress-code theme parties — think sexy nurses and bikini bashes — as promotional tactics. The crowds they attract are very much alike: students, horny lads and those who want to go on a bender. Girls who dress accordingly can often get free or cheaper admission.

## Lava

Room 18's next-door neighbor, Lava is the Xinyi District's hottest all-you-can-drink club. Weekends are always packed.

► Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays are all-you-can-drink, Fridays and Saturdays are not. NT\$300 to NT\$700

► B1, 22, Songshou Rd, Taipei City (台北市松壽路22號B1)

## Pasoul

Lava's younger sister, another trendy spot at which to drink until you hurl.

► Wednesdays to Saturdays, NT\$500 to NT\$800

► B1, 223, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段223號B1)

## Hips

Used to host Taipei's best salsa night but it's now struggling to stay in business.

► Wednesdays to Sundays, NT\$200 to NT\$300

► B1, 277, Dunhua S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路二段277號B1)

## Club W (Formerly Wax)

We called it gritty, a basement dive and the nastiest bar in town — so it can't be bad. It was renovated last year and the name was changed from Wax to Club W.

► Mondays to Sundays, NT\$100 to NT\$500

► B1, 8, Keelung Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市基隆路一段8號B1)

► www.club-jump.com

## Mint

This snazzy hip-hop club has a killer location: Taipei 101. But tomorrow will be Mint's last party as a new club is due to open in the venue on April 10.

► Free admission (from 9pm) tonight and tomorrow

► B1, 45, Shifu Rd, Taipei City (台北市市府路45號B1)

## Room 18

Famed for its model, fashionista and wannabe clientele, Room 18 is one of Taipei's longest-running nightclubs. Two rooms: house and hip-hop. The venue is being renovated and is scheduled to reopen on April 1.

► Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, NT\$600

► B1, 88, Songren Rd, Taipei City (台北市松仁路88號B1)

► www.room18.com.tw



LJ1 Bukem, right and Conrad raised the roof at Luxy last month.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LUXY



With Plush, B1, Party Room and Rank having bit the dust, Mint bowing out this weekend and Room 18 taking a break, now is as good a time as any to take stock and see exactly what is out there.

## Luxy

Open since 2003, Luxy is Taipei's largest and best venue to see top-class international DJs. The main room features hip-hop, pop and R 'n' B, while the other room hosts electronic dance music. Great sound system. Capacity is about 2,000. Ladies night on Wednesday and house dance party on Thursdays.

► Wednesdays to Saturdays, NT\$500 to NT\$600 (free entry before 11pm)

► 5F, 201, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路四段201號5樓)

► www.luxy-taipei.com

## Primo

The capital's most exclusive and stylish club operates a membership scheme. Everything and everyone here looks extremely posh and it's the perfect location for celebrity spotting. Music policy is hip-hop/house.

► Wednesdays to Saturdays, NT\$1,000 for non-members

► 2F, 297, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 5, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路五段297號2樓)

► www.club-primo.com

## Jump

Descendant of Taipei's biggest underground gay club, TeXound. Expect nothing but electronic dance/house music here.

► Fridays and Saturdays, NT\$500

## [ EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT ]

Tonight at **Riverside Live House (西門紅樓展演廳)**, it's pop pianist and vocalist **Si Han (思涵)**, followed by the band **No Name (無名)**. Tomorrow pop-rock act **Color Band** and indie-rock outfit **Pen Sauce (筆醬)** take to the stage.

► 177 Xining S Rd, Taipei City (台北市西寧南路177號). Call (02) 2370-8805 or visit [www.riverside.com.tw](http://www.riverside.com.tw) for more information

► Shows start at 8:30pm

► Entrance is NT\$400 tonight and tomorrow, includes one drink

**Sea Journey Jazz Combo (海洋知音爵士樂團)**, a four-piece with vibraphone, bass, drums and guitar, appears tonight at **Sappho de Base. Kate's Jazz Trio** plays tomorrow. On Tuesday it's **T and T Jazz Trio**, on Wednesday it's **Sappho Jazz Quartet** and on Thursday it's **Free Breathing Ensemble (世界軌跡)**, which features the sounds of tabla, bass, accordion and violin.

► B1, 1, Ln 102, Anhe Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市安和路一段102巷1號B1). Call (02) 2700-5411 (after 9pm) or visit [www.sappho102.biz](http://www.sappho102.biz) for more information

► Performances begin at 10:30pm on weekends, 10pm on weekdays

► No admission fee

Every Wednesday night at the **Cosmopolitan Grill** there's a blues open mic held by the Blues Society in Taiwan. All are welcome to bring their instruments and sit in on guitar, bass or drums.

► 1F, 218 Changchun Rd, Taipei City (台北市長春路218號1樓). Call (02) 2508-0304 or visit [www.cosmo.com.tw](http://www.cosmo.com.tw) for more information

► 8pm to 11pm every Wednesday

► No admission fee

**EZ5 Live House** hosts Mando-pop singers backed by a live band every night. Highlights this week include **Huang Chung-yuan (黃中原)** tomorrow, **Julia Peng (彭佳慧)**, a major

draw who appears every Tuesday, and **Emily Guan (官靈芝)** on Thursday.

► 211, Anhe Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市安和路二段211號). Call (02) 2738-3995 or visit [www.ez5.com.tw](http://www.ez5.com.tw) for more information

► Music shows run from 9:45pm to 12:30am

► Entrance (including two drinks) ranges from NT\$600 to NT\$850, depending on the performer

Post-rock band **Emily (艾蜜莉)** appears tonight at **Underworld (地下社會)** along with **Taimaica Sound System (台買加環繞音效)**, an outfit that mixes and matches reggae, ska and rocksteady. Tomorrow the sounds begin with metal band **Catapult** followed by a set of moody, Radiohead-inspired indie rock from **Brain Roller**. On Wednesday it's all-female industrial band **Go Chic** and indie electronica band **Space Cake (太空蛋糕)**.

► B1, 45 Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路45號B1). Call (02) 2369-0103 or visit [www.upsaid.com/underworld](http://www.upsaid.com/underworld) for more information

► Shows are from 9:30pm to 11:30pm on Fridays and Saturdays and 9pm to 11pm on Wednesdays

► Entrance is NT\$300 tonight and tomorrow and includes one drink. Wednesday's show is NT\$100

## Exhibition

**The Age of Writing Poems and Indulging in Wine — Calligraphy and Paintings by Chiang I-han (詩酒年華—姜一涵書畫展)** is a selection of works by scholar and artist Chiang I-han (姜一涵), a painter steeped in two aesthetic traditions. Chiang's visual language is a combination of the bold and colorful shapes of high-modernist masters such as Mark Rothko and Joan Miro with traditional ideas and forms of Chinese calligraphy and ink painting.

► National Museum of History (國立歷史博物館), 49 Nanhai Rd, Taipei City (台北市南海路49號). Open daily from 10am to

6pm, closed on Mondays. Tel: (02) 2361-0270. On the Net: [www.nmh.gov.tw](http://www.nmh.gov.tw)

► Until April 5

**Lee Tsai-chien's Solo Exhibition (李再鈺雕塑個展)** features 18 metal objects by Taiwan's preeminent master of geometrical sculpture. Ancient Greek ideal forms and Buddhist and Taoist philosophy inspire Lee's monumental creations incorporating circles, triangles and squares.

► Main Trend Gallery (大趨勢畫廊), 209-1, Chengde Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市承德路三段209-1號). Open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 11am to 7pm. Tel: (02) 2587-3412. On the Net: [www.maintrendgallery.com.tw](http://www.maintrendgallery.com.tw)

► Until April 25

The natural cycle of growth and decay informs **The Day I Saw Past and Future Sceneries Playing (那天我看見昨天和明天風景在遊戲)**, a solo exhibition by Jang Tang-kuh (張堂庫). Employing a visual aesthetic that harks back to early modern traditions of landscape painting, Jung's pastoral canvases depict scenes of overgrown gardens, running brooks and mountains shrouded in mist.

► Metaphysical Art Gallery (形而上畫廊), 7F, 219, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段219號7樓).

Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 6:30pm. Tel: (02) 2711-0055. On the Net: [www.artmap.com.tw](http://www.artmap.com.tw)

► Saturday until April 8

**Explore** is a group exhibition that includes works by Hubert Cance, Iskren Semkov and Luiz Cavalli. The artists hailing from France, Bulgaria and Brazil use abstraction, expressionism and realism to "explore" landscape and still life.

► X-Power Gallery, 98, Xinyi Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市信義路四段98號).

Open Mondays to Thursdays from 11am to 6pm and Fridays and Saturdays from 11am to 8pm. Tel: (02) 2708-0929. On the Net: [www.xpgallery.com.tw](http://www.xpgallery.com.tw)

► Until March 31



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARINSKY BALLET COMPANY

## Dance

The Ballet Company and Orchestra of Marinsky Theater will arrive in Taipei next week, bringing with them their acclaimed revival of the 19th-century classic **Sleeping Beauty**, as well as the perennial **Swan Lake**. The company went back into its treasure chest of an archive to find the blueprints and drawings of the original sets and costumes as well as score and choreographic notations to recreate the first **Sleeping Beauty**. Critics agree the revived **Beauty** is a masterpiece.

► March 27 and March 28 at 7:30pm, March 29 at 2:30pm (**Sleeping Beauty**); March 30 to April 1, at 7:30pm (**Swan Lake**)

► National Theater (國家戲劇院), 21-1, Zhongshan S Rd, Taipei City (台北市中山南路21-1號)

► Tickets left range in price from NT\$3,000 to NT\$8,000, available through NTCH ticketing or online at [www.artsticket.com.tw](http://www.artsticket.com.tw)

The Yingge Ceramics Museum investigates the human form in **Passionate Beings: Contemporary Ceramics of**

**Museum Collection (多情·人—當代陶藝典藏展)**, an exhibit of 35 sculptures from its permanent collection.

► Yingge Ceramics Museum (鶯歌陶藝博物館), 200 Wenhua Rd, Yingge Township, Taipei County (台北縣鶯歌鎮文化路200號). Open Tuesdays to Fridays from 9:30am to 5pm and Saturdays and Sundays from 9:30am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 8677-2727. On the Net: [www.ceramics.tpc.gov.tw](http://www.ceramics.tpc.gov.tw)

► Until April 19

**Ancient Pottery of the Paiwan Tribe in Taiwan (相盪的居所—台灣排灣族古陶壺特展)** shows how ceramics are closely associated with the legends of the Paiwan tribe's origins, and how pottery helps to perpetuate the tribe's social hierarchy.

► National Museum of Natural Science (國立自然科學博物館), 1, Kuanchien Rd, Taichung City (台中市館前路1號). Open daily from 9am to 5pm, closed Mondays.

On the Net: [www.mnns.edu.tw](http://www.mnns.edu.tw)

► Until May 17

**The God of Earth in Taiwan (台灣土地公特展)** explains the origins of the Earth God (土地公) and why it continues to play an important role in folk worship throughout the country.

► National Museum of Natural Science (國立自然科學博物館), 1, Kuanchien Rd, Taichung City (台中市館前路1號). Open daily from 9am to 5pm, closed Mondays.

On the Net: [www.mnns.edu.tw](http://www.mnns.edu.tw)

► Until May 31

**Madden Reality: Post-Taipei Art Group (叛離異象:後台北畫派)** brings together 72 works by eight of Taiwan's most well-respected contemporary artists.

► Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), 181, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段181號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9:30am to 5:30pm, closes at 8:30pm on Saturdays. Tel: (02) 2595-7656. On the Net: [www.tfam.museum](http://www.tfam.museum)

► Until April 5

## RESTAURANTS

## Xiao Liu La Mian (小六手工拉麵)

**Address:** 1F, 223, Heping E Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市和平東路二段223號1樓)

**Telephone:** (02) 2702-8427 **Open:** Daily from 11am to 9:30pm

**Average meal:** NT\$120 to NT\$180 **Details:** Chinese and English menu; credit cards not accepted

Sometimes you just want a decent bowl of noodles, but without the grungy setting of a night market or a well-worn shop.

Xiao Liu La Mian (小六手工拉麵) fills this niche. Its homemade ramen might lack the character of what you can find at some 50-year old noodle joints, but the food satisfies, the dining area is clean and comfortable, and the prices are generally low.

The ramen, or lamian (拉麵, "pulled noodles"), are made Lanzhou Province-style (蘭州手工拉麵), according to a write-up in Chinese printed on the wallpaper. With monogrammed bowls and stock framed pictures, Xiao Liu's vibe clearly says "chain restaurant." But not in a painful way.

The interior is simple, tasteful and practically arranged, with traditional wooden tables and stools for groups, and two long bars for individual diners lining the walls. The well-heelled and the wearers of flip-flops will feel equally at home here, and even when the room is full, it doesn't feel crowded.

Diners are reminded that the noodles are made from scratch, as the cooks, in full view of the room, pull apart batches of dough spanning the length of both arms and smack them against a table, occasioning jarring, loud thumps.

The lamian with minced meat and mushroom (炸醬拉麵, NT\$80) is a more-than-passable version of this noodle shop standby. The savory sauce is garnished with sliced cucumber and goes well with the thick ribbons of ramen. The noodles, which are machine cut and are available in either thick or thin cuts, have a chewy consistency but may seem a little bland to connoisseurs. The dish comes with a side soup made of a rich pork broth.

For a heartier meal, the shop offers several recommendations: lamian with beef in chili oil (紅油牛肉拉麵, NT\$120), lamian with deep-fried pork chop (香酥排拉麵, NT\$120) and lamian with "health-building" herbal mutton (藥膳羊肉拉麵, NT\$140).

The latter is made with a fragrant broth containing what the menu says are "36 kinds of Chinese herbal medicines, pork bone, and fresh vegetables." The mutton cuts were too fatty and chewy, and though the hint of chili in the soup helped disguise the meat's strong taste, just the soup and noodles would have tasted better.

Xiao Liu's menu, which has a reader-friendly layout and good English translations, offers a few novel choices: lamian with lemon-sour deep-fried chicken nuggets (檸檬雞塊拉麵, NT\$120) and lamian with shrimp and curry soup (鮮蝦咖哩拉麵, NT\$140). There's also a small dumpling selection, including steamed pork dumplings (小籠湯包, NT\$80 for eight) and boiled pork and vegetable dumplings (NT\$50 for 10).

The food won't