03. Flying High: Air Travel across Taiwan

Have you ever been on a plane? In Taiwan, you can fly in a big plane to another country, like Japan, Vietnam, or the USA. This is called an international flight. But, planes are not just for going to other countries. When you fly within a country, it's called a domestic flight. You can take a plane to visit Taiwan's outlying islands.

These small islands are beautiful! Some of the most popular ones are Penghu*, Kinmen*, Matsu*, and Orchid Island. Many people fly to these islands. Why? Because you can't drive or take a train to get there, and ferry rides can take many hours or be canceled because of bad weather. From Taipei Songshan** Airport, you can fly to Kinmen in about one hour. A ferry ride to Kinmen can take over five hours!

Taiwan has 17 airports, and some are very busy. Taoyuan* International Airport is the biggest and has most of the international flights. Taipei Songshan Airport and airports in cities like Tainan*, Kaohsiung*, Taitung*, and Hualien* also have many domestic flights every day. These airports are smaller and usually have shorter lines.

The planes for domestic flights are small. Some only have only 50 to 70 seats, and you can see the pilot! Even though the flights are short, you still need to check-in and go through security at the airport. These domestic flights are quick and give you a cool view of the mountains, rivers, cities, and coastlines below.

Another way to travel in the air is by cable car. A cable car is a small cabin that hangs from a moving wire high above the ground. The Maokong** Gondola in Taipei is famous. It goes over the Taipei Zoo and up to tea farms in the Maokong hills. The Sun Moon Lake Ropeway gives a great view of the lake and nearby mountains. Some cable cars even have glass floors so you can see straight down!

Planes and cable cars help us travel fast and see beautiful places. You can see clouds, trees, and the ocean. Air travel in Taiwan is fun and exciting!

*Penghu = 澎湖, Kinmen = 金門, Matsu = 馬祖, Taoyuan = 桃園, Tainan = 台南,
Kaohsiung = 高雄, Taitung = 台東, Hualien = 花蓮
**Songshan = 松山, Maokong = 貓空