

Taipei Anime/Manga Shopping Guide

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When I was about to go to Taiwan during the summer of 1997, I searched the web to see if I could find some good places to buy anime/manga materials in Taipei, Taiwan. To my surprise, though, I couldn't find any material on this topic, not to mention a shopping guide. So, I wrote up this page to fill in that particular gap. [Please realize that this guide should not be considered complete since I only made a note of the places that I found on my one trip there. There are probably many more anime-related shops in Taipei. This guide, therefore, should just be used as a starting point for any shopping trip that you plan in the future.]

Back in the old days (some three or four years ago), if you wanted to find something anime-related in Taiwan, you only needed to go out the door and down the street until you got to the nearest little store where you would find anime pencil boards, anime-inspired snacks, pencils, notebooks, erasers, etc. Things are much different now. My recent experience has shown how difficult it is to even find good anime pencil boards in Taiwan.

So, let us begin. . .

Anime Materials

* *JB Comics*

TEL: (02)382-2288 FAX:(02)312-1357

I was lucky to have stumbled across this store. Before attempting to go there, I would highly recommend finding out exact directions. JB seems to be a chain since they seem to have stores in many of the larger cities in Taiwan. The one in Taipei is located in a small alley inside a small block that doesn't really have a noticeable road leading to it.

This store sells actual imported anime materials from Japan. You will be able to find mangas (Japanese), videos, posters and other anime collectables. The price is comparable to that of normal import stores, but the selection is impressive. I was able to find stuff here that I was unable to find elsewhere.

* *Gon Gwan* (sorry about the romanization -- I'll try to scan in the actual chinese characters later)

Okay, almost everyone in Taiwan will know this place. It's a larger shopping street where the clientele seems to be primarily college and high school students (teenagers in general). Sitting between two clothing shops is another Japanese anime import store. The selection is not as large as JB, and the price tends to be somewhat higher. However, since a lot people will be there anyway to do shopping, I thought that I'd mention it.

While you're here, you'll also find many record stores. Check some of them out because they often carry posters (some have quite a large collection), anime videos, and those laminated cards with anime pictures. The cards can be pretty cheap, although you should check out the price just in case. Some places charge quite a bit for those cards even though you can find it cheaper elsewhere.

* *Wan-Nian (Ten Thousand Year) Department Store & Shi-Men Ding*

This "department" store can be found in Shi-Men Ding (East Gate District), the classical hangout of teenagers and college students. This is a large shopping district that has been around since my parents were teenagers. Some people say that this place is not very safe anymore because it is older and a little run down, although every day and night there seems to be thousands of students walking through the stores shopping for clothes, accessories, etc. Maybe one reason the area isn't popular now is because there are so many kids there and not all of them can be considered the ideal "Asian child". The department store itself might have been, at one point, a nice one, but now it is definitely a run-down place. I don't even know if it is owned by any department store since it just seems to be a building where many small merchants have set up shop. However, if you want to find anime stuff, this is one of the best places I've found. One of the floors is completely occupied with shops that cater to anime collectibles. You will find multiple bookstores stocking Japanese mangas, magazines and books. You'll find cheap poster dealers. You'll find specialty anime-

collectible stores that sells the harder-to-find items or commemorative materials (i.e. a complete set of Ranma 1/2 calling cards in a wooden glass display case). There is also one store that sells a lot of pencil boards (these are the real things from Japan) that I was unable to find elsewhere and many art books. Finally, if you want models (planes, mechs, Anime-characters, and more), you'll probably find it here.

In Shi-Men Ding, you'll find a lot of anime materials but there isn't always a specific store . There is one shop (unfortunately I don't have the address or name), that seems to be a warehouse-like place that sells all the stuff you find at other stores. Things like posters (HUGE COLLECTION), wall scrolls, anime (TONS) and figurines and plastic dolls, key chains, anime cards, picture albums, jpop idol memorabilia and anything else can be found here. They don't really sell mangas or CDs, although they do have a large stock of Japanese magazines. This place is really two stores on top of one-another. Look around and see if you can find it. I'd appreciate the address! ^_^ Besides these stores, you should just really try shopping around Shi-Men Ding. I found some really cool keychains (Dorameon, Rouronin Kenshin and more) at some random places and street-side stands here. I found a cute Ranma 1/2 pin from a street dealer there too. Just keep your eyes open.

** Shin-Gwan Market*

This is the premier computer/electronic district. I'm sure if you ask people where to buy computer stuff, you'll be told to come here. The area has expanded, so the place you'll want to go is the original section located under an overpass. Here you'll find a large selection of anime CDs (mostly those by Soon-May) and the prices are a lot lower than you'll find elsewhere. In fact, come here to buy music CDs. I found them to be the cheapest (there are 2 CD stores). You'll also find a few book sellers that sell mangas, a lot of used book/manga dealers, anime videos, a poster store that has a large selection of anime posters, wall scrolls, playing cards, and puzzles. Note, this place has two floors. The upper floor has more electronic stuff, but if you're looking for video games and stuff you can find it there. For more anime/manga materials, look downstairs. NOTE TO PARENTS: In addition to selling CDs and videos tapes, a lot (and I mean A LOT) of vendors sell video cds. Most of the video cds are pornographic in nature (whether anime or live action), and they don't hide the covers of the cds. You'll also see adult magazines sold here. It's not like a porn shop or an adult bookstore, but there is exposure to some pornography.

For anime CDs, used mangas and posters, this is one of the TOP places to go!

Manga

For some brief description of manga titles, take a look at my manga list.

* *Wan-Fu (Ten Thousand Fortune) Books* (I will try to get directions)

TEL:(02) 556-3384; (02) 559-9307

This is one of three manga warehouse/book stores you'll find on the same street (there's a fourth around the corner). Two of the stores are side-by-side and the third one is across the street. These stores used to be primarily warehouse dealers that sold to bookstores directly. Now, they sell to the general public at about a 10-20% discount. If a manga is on the market, it can be found here. These places are manga heaven. All the mangas are in Chinese, and they have shipments that come in about once a week. Unlike buying from bookstores, you can buy the mangas in entire sets 'cause they are always stocked. Until I get an exact addresses, I can only say that it isn't too far from the main train station in Taipei and that the alley connects to one of those circular streets like you see in European movies all the time. I would suggest going to Wan-Fu and the one next to it. If one of them doesn't have a copy, the other will.

That's all I have for now. I'll try to find out more information, but that has to really wait until the next time I go back to Taiwan. I'll try to refine this listing to give people a better feel for the stores, add more details, and to fill in information that I left out. If anyone knows of any more places or have corrections, I'd be happy to add them on to my list. Just make sure that you send your name (and email address, but I won't put the email address on unless you give me the okay) so that I can credit you for the information.