



International Travel and
Hosting Fellowship

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TAM'S HOSTING EXPERIENCES IN NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA

Our ITHF visits in New Zealand and Australia in January and February of this year were quite enjoyable. Our interactions with Kiwis and Aussies, whom we found to be kind, friendly, helpful and honest people, renewed our faith in humanity. Our host in Christchurch, New Zealand, Deryn Tregurtha, took my husband Hans, fellow Rotary ITHF member Michelle Tabler, another girlfriend and me on a lovely driving tour. We were able to see the city from above and explore the nooks and crannies of the outer neighborhoods, including the beautiful beaches. Our conversations were deep; we learned much about the impacts of the 2011 earthquake that forced her to abandon her home as well as her family's rock and gem business.

Our host Tim Reynolds and I had some great e-mail conversations prior to our visit to him in the suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria. He picked Hans and me up at the airport and presented me with a package of the iconic Aussie cookie named Tim Tam to honor our first names! Not only is he a marvelous conversationalist, but he was also a fantastic tour guide and led us on all means of public transport as we explored Victoria Market, Luna Park, restaurants, cake shops and the Dendy Street Beach bathing boxes in Brighton. Tim hosted a dinner for us and fellow Rotarians, Di and Rob, which resulted in animated discussions about service, history, politics and a gamut of other topics!

After a visit to Tasmania, we returned to Melbourne and drove about an hour south to Geelong for our next visit with longtime ITHF host, Lesley Goode. She took us on a walking tour of the Geelong waterfront, a scenic stroll lined with over 100 colorfully painted "Baywalk Bollards" that tell the history of the city, including characters like sailors and 1930s lifesavers. Lesley went out of her way to prepare a delicious dinner and provide gluten-free foods for me, a "hostess with the mostest!"



Three days later, we arrived in Adelaide, South Australia and were hosted by Diana Clements and her partner Dennis Reynolds. We joined Di's Rotary Club for a visit of the newly restored Art Deco Picadilly Theatre. Afterwards, Di took us on a driving tour of town with a stop at Haigh's Chocolate Company to try and convince us it was better than Swiss chocolate! We also learned that in Australia, they have the Easter Bilby (a native endangered, long-eared marsupial) not the Easter Bunny! That evening, we attended Dennis' Rotary club meeting and heard a fascinating talk on the state of Afghanistan from an Afghani immigrant. The second day, Dennis, a true wine connoisseur, guided us on a tour in the Barossa Valley where we tasted wonderful vintages, ate a great meal and marveled at the scenery. To top that off, we had "snags on the barbie" back at home, enthusiastically joined by Harry, their darling Corgi.

On our last day in Adelaide, we visited the Cleland Wildlife Refuge in the hills above the city. Di had recommended making reservations for the "koala encounter" which allowed us to learn about and pet a koala in a very small group. This animal sanctuary affords the opportunity to see dingoes, wombats, and feed kangaroos, wallabies and even many types of birds right from your hand. Our final ITHF visit was in Perth with Lorraine and Geoff Horsley. We went to dinner at an Asian restaurant and then for drinks at the

Hula Bula, a quirky Tiki bar from the 50s and 60s. We had interesting conversations about Geoff's work as a private pilot for mining companies in the Outback. We learned about Raino's artistic and writing skills when she presented us with several children's books she authored. Our grandchildren have enjoyed having us read these to them.

There were several hosts we never heard back from, so I encourage all members to make sure your directory contact information is up-to-date and to respond promptly to all inquiries, even if to let travelers know you are unable to host at that time. Another recommendation is to list the distance from the center of a major city to your home if you live in the suburbs, or in towns far from a well-known place. **Contact:** Tam Agosti-Gisler Email - tamag5@me.com

Top News

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TAIPEI CONVENTION RECAP

ITHF Activities During the 2026 Rotary International Convention in Taipei



A great deal of planning and teamwork went into making ITHF's activities during the 2026 Rotary International Convention in Taipei a resounding success.

To provide guidance and oversight, ITHF President Ligia Corredor led an organizing committee consisting of President-Elect Simmy Ahluwalia, Michael Chen (Vice President, Taiwan), Alonso Campoi (Vice President, South America), and Sivaprasad Pillai (Administrator). Special recognition goes to Michael Chen, whose tireless efforts and attention to detail were instrumental in the successful execution of all activities.

The Taiwan team arranged approximately 50 rooms for ITHF members at the United Hotel, conveniently located beside the Taipei Dome, where the Convention's Opening and Closing Ceremonies were held, as well as accommodations at several nearby hotels.

The Membership Committee, led by Chair Andy Ullman and supported by the Taiwan team, produced promotional flyers in five languages—English, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, and Portuguese. Displayed at the ITHF booth in the House of Friendship, these multilingual materials enabled Rotary members from around the world to learn more about ITHF and take information home for future reference.



As always, the ITHF booth became a vibrant hub of activity throughout the Convention. Thanks to the dedication of numerous volunteer members, coordinated by Sivaprasad Pillai, the booth attracted many visitors and resulted in several new memberships, including first-time members from Honduras, South Korea, and Romania.

President's Celebration Dinner - On the evening of June 12, the ITHF President's Celebration Dinner was held at the United Hotel in Taipei. More than 100 ITHF members and family members attended, making it one of the largest and most memorable gatherings in ITHF history.

Guests enjoyed a traditional Chinese buffet along with a variety of outstanding cultural performances, including:

- Traditional Balinese dance presented by Rotary members from District 3420, Bali
- Chinese face-changing and magic performances presented by Rotary members from District 3482
- A saxophone performance by fellow Rotarians from District 3482

The evening's performances were warmly received and thoroughly enjoyed by all. As the celebration continued, participants from many countries joined in karaoke, sharing songs from their homelands while singing and dancing together in a joyful atmosphere. The evening became a wonderful expression of international friendship and fellowship and set a new benchmark for future ITHF celebration dinners.

The Annual General Meeting and ITHF Information Session were also well attended. The information session, presented by Michal Skup of Poland, provided members and prospective members with valuable insights into ITHF programs and opportunities.

Post-Convention Tour of Taiwan

Following the Convention, 72 ITHF members and their families embarked on an unforgettable five-day, four-night adventure through Western Taiwan organized by ITHF. Although Eastern Taiwan was still recovering from recent earthquake-related impacts and several attractions remained closed, the carefully planned western itinerary offered an outstanding blend of breathtaking scenery, rich history, delicious cuisine, cultural experiences, and, most importantly, fellowship. By the end of the journey, many participants who had begun as strangers had become lifelong friends.

Day 1 – Tainan: History, Nature and Culinary Delights

The adventure began with a journey south to Taiwan's historic capital, Tainan. Participants explored the beautiful wetlands of Taijiang National Park, gliding peacefully through the enchanting Green Tunnel, where lush mangroves formed a natural canopy overhead.

The group then stepped back in time while exploring the historic Anping Fort and the bustling Anping Old Street, sampling local delicacies and discovering why Tainan is regarded as Taiwan's culinary capital. It was the perfect introduction to Taiwan's rich history and warm hospitality.

Day 2 – Alishan: Into the Clouds

The tour continued into the spectacular Alishan mountain region, climbing to an elevation of nearly 2,500 metres. Surrounded by cool mountain air and majestic forests, participants admired magnificent ancient forests, towering giant trees, and the refreshing mountain climate. The group also enjoyed a vibrant cultural performance showcasing the traditions, music, and dances of Taiwan's Tsou tribe, offering fascinating insights into the region's rich heritage.

That evening, the group enjoyed the charm and elegance of the historic Alishan Hotel, nestled high in the mountains, where anticipation built for the following morning's famous sunrise.

Day 3 – Sunrise Magic and Sun Moon Lake Serenity

The day began at 4:00 am as everyone eagerly gathered for the journey to Zhushan Station. Their early wake-up call was richly rewarded when perfect weather revealed one of Taiwan's most spectacular sights—a magnificent sunrise illuminating the mountain peaks and ancient forests in brilliant shades of gold and orange. It was a magical moment that many described as the highlight of the entire tour and worth waking up at an ungodly hour.

After descending the mountain, participants enjoyed Chiayi's famous turkey rice before continuing to the stunning Sun Moon Lake.

There, members relaxed in luxurious surroundings, savored excellent cuisine, soaked in soothing hot springs, and admired the tranquil beauty of Taiwan's largest alpine lake. The peaceful atmosphere provided the perfect opportunity to unwind while strengthening friendships.



Day 4 – Lukang and Tai'an

The day's adventures continued in the charming historic town of Lukang, where District 3462 Incoming District Governor Power warmly welcomed the group and presented commemorative gifts, reflecting Rotary's spirit of friendship and hospitality.

One of the day's most enjoyable highlights was a traditional wooden duck painting workshop. Participants enthusiastically embraced their artistic side, transforming simple wooden ducks into colourful and imaginative works of art. The activity generated plenty of laughter, friendly competition, and memorable photo opportunities as everyone's unique creativity was proudly displayed.

Later that afternoon, the group arrived at the beautiful Onsen Papawaqa Tai'an Hot Spring Resort.

That evening, everyone gathered in traditional yukatas and slippers for a fun and memorable group photograph in the hotel lobby before relaxing in the renowned Tai'an hot springs. Surrounded by the peaceful mountain valley, participants enjoyed a perfect evening of relaxation, conversation, and fellowship.



Day 5 – A Taste of Taiwan

The final day brought the group to the lively Nanzhuang Old Street, where members wandered through local shops and market stalls, sampling an irresistible variety of traditional snacks, fresh fruits, and regional specialties while searching for more souvenirs to take home.

The tour concluded with a delicious Taiwanese-style shabu-shabu hot pot lunch, providing one last opportunity for everyone to gather around the table, share stories, laugh together, and reflect on an unforgettable journey.

As the buses returned to Taipei, it was clear that the tour had become far more than a sightseeing excursion. It had been a journey filled with discovery, laughter, cultural experiences, and genuine fellowship. New friendships were formed, old friendships strengthened, and participants returned home with cherished memories of Taiwan and a renewed appreciation for the unique spirit of the ITHF family.



Home Hospitality Program

In addition to the Convention and post-convention tour activities, Taiwanese ITHF members hosted four visiting groups through the Home Hospitality Program.

Host families and their guests enjoyed meaningful interactions, shared cultural experiences, and developed lasting friendships. The program successfully fulfilled its purpose of promoting international fellowship and strengthening bonds among ITHF members worldwide.

The success of all these activities was made possible through the dedication of our volunteers, the generosity of our Rotarian hosts, and the enthusiastic participation of members from around the world. Together, they demonstrated the true spirit of ITHF—building friendships across cultures and creating memories that will last a lifetime.

Submitted by : Michael Chen & Simmy Ahluwalia



Upcoming Tours and Events

- **Post Convention Taiwan Cultural Discovery Tour, June 18-22, 2026.** *More info and a link to registration at <https://www.ithf.org/events/taiwan-cultural-discovery-tour>*
- **Discover the Magic of Mexico City, September 20-27, 2026.** *More info at <https://www.ithf.org/events/mexico-city-sept-tour>*
- **Uganda Safari Tour, RESCHEDULED: February 24th-March 6th, 2027.** *Will include gorilla tracking and chimpanzee tracking! Contact Andy Ullman at andyuco@gmail.com for more info. More info also at <https://www.ithf.org/events/tour-the-pearl-of-africa-uganda>*
- **An Amazing Journey to South America- Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and Easter Island, February 26-March 12, 2027.**



HELP NEEDED-ITHF CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

We are seeking help from the ITHF members on these two items:

1. **ITHF travel experiences:** Please send us stories and photos from your most memorable ITHF hosting/travel experiences. We would like to publish at least one story per month to encourage ITHF members to engage with other members in hosting experiences.
2. **ITHF members "Ready to Host":** If you are interested in hosting other ITHF members, please send a brief description and photos of a unique attraction or experience available in your area/region. We hope to post at least one "Ready to Host" listing for each newsletter issue.

As before, any ITHF member who submits material which is published in one of these categories will receive an additional year of ITHF membership as thanks for their assistance.

Please send your submissions to Andy Ullman, ITHF Membership Chair at andyuco@gmail.com

Thanks in advance for your contribution to the ITHF Connections newsletter!

Your ITHF Connections Newsletter Team:

Andy Ullman, Chicago, USA
Michael Chen, Taipei, Taiwan
Olurotimi (Sam) Adeleye, Lagos, Nigeria
Fredi Bochnick, Bonn, Germany

Rosette Nabuuma, Vancouver, Canada
Gizem Bastas, Ankara, Turkey
Nma Onuigbo, Abuja, Nigeria

ITHF VIRTUAL TRAVEL COMMITTEE

Become an active volunteer member of this Virtual Travel Committee and help us bring the pleasure of visiting and learning about other countries from the comfort of your home, as well as informing our ITHF members about the opportunities for in-person travel that ITHF provides.

UPCOMING VIRTUAL TOUR PRESENTATIONS

- July 24 and 25 – Patagonia
- September – New ITHF Member Orientation

Contact: **Simmy Ahluwalia**, – simmyithf@gmail.com

05/05

ITHF now has 1041 members