

# Taiwan, Asia's new showcase

*Are Hong Kong and Singapore still your showcases for Asia? An analysis of the shift, and a roadmap for fine food and tableware.*

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**$1,515**

**Annual shop rent per sq ft in Hong Kong. In Taipei: $105 to $210.**

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**x3 to x4**

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### Dear reader,

In Letter No. 1, we toured Asia in seven signals. This first special issue focuses on a single market, Taiwan, and on a question export directors often ask me: where can a brand build its image in Asia without burning its budget? For twenty years, the answer was Hong Kong or Singapore. That answer is changing. Here is why, and how to make the most of it, category by category.



*Maxime*
**de Fougeroux**
Founder, ByMyFrench

AT A GLANCE

# This special issue in seven lines


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| METHOD | An Asia portfolio combines volume markets, which pay for the structure, and showcase markets, which build the image and convince buyers elsewhere. | p. 3 |
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| TAIWAN | GDP per capita above Japan's, rents 7 to 14 times lower than Hong Kong, and Asian and European brands testing Asia there. | p. 5 |
| FINE FOOD | €315M of French exports in 2025. Wines are down; dairy, cream and charcuterie hold up. Five channels to combine. | p. 6 |
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| HOW-TO | From ex-works France to shelf price (x3 to x4), import rules, the questions to ask an importer, and the limits of the model. | p. 8 |
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NUMBER OF THE MONTH

**¥382bn**

What Taiwanese visitors spent in Japan in Q3 2026 (+26.2%), ahead of mainland Chinese visitors (¥358bn). These consumers saw Tokyo and Seoul before they saw your product.

Source: Japan Tourism Agency (see The Asia Letter No. 1).

01 · THE METHOD

# Volume and showcase: two roles not to confuse

*No French brand can afford to be everywhere in Asia with the same intensity. Successful export directors assign a role to each country.*

## Two different missions

Volume markets pay for the structure: they absorb containers, amortise registration costs and fund the team. Showcase markets build the image: a well-placed corner, a chef who uses your products, a visible presence in a department store. They earn little directly, but they make every conversation easier elsewhere.

## A role on the move

For twenty years, Hong Kong and Singapore played this showcase role for the whole region. Exposure costs there have soared, while Taiwan offers an equally demanding consumer for a fraction of the price. This shift is what this issue analyses.

MARKET · ROLE

| MARKET | ROLE | WHAT IT BRINGS |
|---|---|---|
| **Japan** | Volume · standards | €1.32bn of French food and drink; the region's quality benchmark |
| **South Korea** | Volume · trends | €610M of food and drink; Seoul, a fashion and beauty showcase |
| **China** | Volume | France's top customer in Asia (€24bn); huge e-commerce, long cycle |
| **Southeast Asia** | Emerging volume | Growth driven by Shopee, Lazada and TikTok Shop |
| **Hong Kong · Singapore** | Hub · historical showcase | Distributors' HQs, travel retail; prohibitive exposure |
| **Taiwan** | Showcase · mid-size volume | Affluent trend-setting consumers, moderate rents, a regional test bed |

Sources: DG Trésor, France Diplomatie (2026), The Asia Letter No. 1.

OUR TAKE

***The question is not "Taiwan or Japan?" but "what role for each country?". A brand that asks its showcase market for volume, or its volume market to carry the image, wears itself out on both fronts. Taiwan ticks a rare box: it can play the showcase without costing the price of one.***

02 · HONG KONG AND SINGAPORE

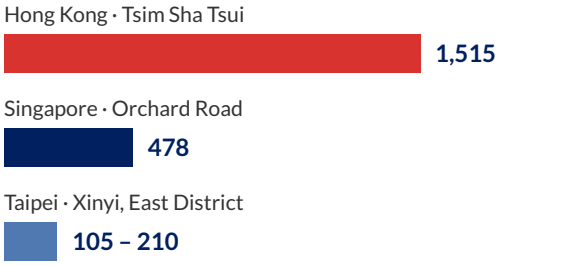
# The historical showcases now cost too much

*International shoppers, regional distributors, a marketplace image: Hong Kong and Singapore were long the obvious gateway. The model still works for luxury. For tableware and fine food, it no longer does.*

## THE FACTS

- In **Tsim Sha Tsui**, shop rent reaches **$1,515 per sq ft a year**: Asia's most expensive street, 4th in the world.
- In Singapore, **Orchard Road** rents at **$478 per sq ft a year**.
- In Taipei's prime districts (**Xinyi**, around Taipei 101, and the East District), expect **$105 to $210**.
- Hong Kong is recovering: retail sales **+9.6%** in H1 2026, driven by **jewellery and watches**. The rebound benefits luxury first, not our categories.

## ANNUAL SHOP RENT PER SQ FT ($)




Sources: Cushman & Wakefield (2025); FTV (02/2026), ByMyFrench conversion.

## Shelf space, the first cost line

At these rent levels, each metre of shelf must generate sales that only jewellery, watches or prestige cosmetics achieve. A glassware range or an artisan terrine lacks the margin to pay for the space: the distributor narrows the range, then the visibility.

## What they keep

Hong Kong and Singapore remain hubs: regional distributor HQs, travel retail, logistics and finance. They are still useful to sign a regional distributor, far less to build an image with end consumers.




*Shin Kong Mitsukoshi, Xinyi district, Taipei. Source: Wikimedia Commons, Tianmu peter (CC BY 3.0).*

OUR TAKE

***Keep Hong Kong and Singapore in the plan, but change their role: distribution hub rather than showcase. The image budget moves to a market where every euro of visibility buys more square metres and more customers.***

03 · TAIWAN

# What makes it the new showcase

*Taiwan combines three conditions rarely found together: affluent, trend-setting consumers, reasonable exposure costs, and retailers that export their concepts across the region.*

**$39,500**
GDP per capita 2025, vs $36,000 in Japan and $36,200 in Korea

**18.9M**
trips abroad in 2025

**14.2%**
of retail sales online (June 2026)

THEY TEST ASIA IN TAIWAN

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Lopia** | Japan | First store outside Japan, in Taichung |
| **Workman** | Japan | First overseas market, "a base for Southeast Asia" |
| **Musinsa** | Korea | 3rd overseas subsidiary, after Japan and China |
| **Alain Ducasse** | France | World-first dual-brand concept store, Taipei, 2026 |
| **Fauré Le Page** | France | First store outside France |
| **COS** | Sweden | World-first concept store, Taipei 101 |

Sources: IMF (April 2026), CNA, momo 2T26, BusinessNext, NOWnews, Korea Herald, Nextapple, Fauré Le Page, Inside Retail, Focus Taiwan.

## Retailers that travel

Eslite Spectrum, Taiwan's lifestyle department store (books, design, living, fine food), runs 49 locations across Taiwan, Hong Kong, Suzhou, Tokyo and Kuala Lumpur, and is preparing a store in Osaka. A listing with a Taiwanese retailer can mean joining its regional expansion.




*Eslite Spectrum Nanxi, Zhongshan district, Taipei. Source: Wikimedia Commons, Kiyoteru Awaji (CC BY-SA 4.0).*

OUR TAKE

***Success in Taipei travels well to Tokyo, Seoul or Bangkok: Taiwanese consumers know those cities, and their buyers watch what works in Taipei. That is what a showcase is.***

04 · FINE FOOD

# Five channels to combine

*French food and drink exports to Taiwan reached €315M in 2025 (-2.4%), held back by wines (-16%) and spirits (-18%). Dairy, cream and charcuterie are holding their ground.*

**€315M**
of French food and drink in 2025

**€54M**
of dairy products and cheese

**42%**
market share for French cream, No. 1

**+51%**
for French pork

| CHANNEL | RETAILERS | ROLE | WATCH OUT |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Premium and department stores** | Shin Kong Mitsukoshi, SOGO, Breeze, city'super, Mia C'bon (21 stores) | **Showcase · gifting** | French promotions, gift boxes; high margins |
| **Organised volume** | Costco (4 clubs in its global top 10), Prosperity Plaza (ex-Carrefour), Mega PX Mart | **Volume** | Listing fees, promotional calendar |
| **Convenience** | 7-Eleven (over 7,000 stores), FamilyMart | **Volume · awareness** | Seasonal collaborations, festive pre-orders |
| **Online** | momo, Shopee, PChome, Coupang | **Volume · price test** | Open after a physical listing |
| **Food service and bakery** | 5-star hotels, French bakeries and bistros | **Prescription** | TIBS (March), Food Taipei and Taiwan Horeca (June) |



*Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Xinyi A11, Taipei. Source: Wikimedia Commons, Solomon203 (CC BY-SA 4.0).*

A WINDOW TO SEIZE

Taiwan banned Spanish pork imports in November 2025: there is room for approved French charcuterie. Watch duties, up to 32-33% on some ham preparations, and Traditional Chinese labelling (TFDA).

Sources: DG Trésor (2026), Team France Export (2026), Focus Taiwan (06/2026), Commercial Times (03/2025).

OUR TAKE

***Start with premium to set the price and the image, then open Costco or e-commerce once the brand is established. The reverse order makes any move upmarket impossible.***

05 · TABLEWARE

# Making room next to Japan and China

*Imported tableware is dominated by China and Japan. France remains a high-end niche: a handicap for volume, but an asset when it comes to standing out.*

**~$40M**
of imported porcelain, $27.9M from China; France $1.6M (-33%)

**~$25M**
of imported table glassware; France $1.4M (-17%)

**25–35%**
department-store commission

| CHANNEL | RETAILERS | ROLE | WATCH OUT |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Department stores** | Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Xinyi, SOGO Zhongxiao and Fuxing, Far Eastern A13, Breeze | Showcase | Corner via the importer; October-November anniversary sales |
| **Lifestyle concept stores** | Eslite Spectrum, Pinkoi (online) | Showcase · regional springboard | Storytelling, design, limited editions |
| **Food service** | Mandarin Oriental, W, Raffles, bistros and cocktail bars | Prescription | Glassware and serving ware |
| **Corporate gifting** | Tech groups, Lunar New Year, Mid-Autumn | One-off volume | Gift boxes; agent +15 to 20% |
| **Volume** | Costco, momo, Shopee | Volume | Sets and packs; open second |

CASE · DURALEX IN TAIPEI

For its 80th anniversary, Duralex staged a four-day art co-creation exhibition in Taipei's Zhongshan district in December 2025, free to enter, with a limited-edition anniversary box auctioned online. A low-cost format designed for social media and local press.




*Duralex 80th anniversary exhibition, Taipei, December 2025. Source: ByMyFrench.*

Sources: UN Comtrade 2025 (mirror statistics), ByMyFrench audit (Taiwan country brief, November 2026).

OUR TAKE

***For a French tableware brand, Taiwan is less a volume market than a place to demonstrate: a well-run corner, a collaboration with a chef or a concept store, and visuals reusable across Asia.***

06 · HOW-TO

# Prices, rules, partners: what to know before you sign

*A showcase only works if the shelf price holds up against Japanese brands and if the importer reports the numbers. Here are the orders of magnitude and the checkpoints.*

## WHAT BUILDS THE SHELF PRICE

**x3 to x4**

**Multiplier from ex-works France to retail price in tableware (ByMyFrench country brief).**

**Freight and import duty**
Duty varies by product category: to be costed with your forwarder.

**Import VAT**
5%, paid at customs by the importer, on the landed value including duty.

**Importer margin**
It funds stock, the field team and in-store activation.

**Department-store commission**
25-35% of the retail price.

## FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK AN IMPORTER

1. Which channels does it cover directly, and with what field team?
2. Which brands does it already carry: competing or complementary?
3. Who funds activation: promoters, promotions, listing fees?
4. What retail price does it target, and with what multiplier?
5. What sell-out data does it share, and how often?

## IMPORT RULES IN BRIEF

| | FINE FOOD | TABLEWARE |
|---|---|---|
| **Border control** | Importer files a TFDA inspection request, up to 15 days before arrival | Same regime: food-contact tableware is inspected (code F02), with migration, lead and cadmium tests |
| **Labelling** | General and nutrition label in Traditional Chinese, with the importer's address; often a sticker applied in Taiwan | Chinese labelling required for items with plastic in contact with food |
| **Duties and taxes** | Import duty varies by product category (up to 32-33% on some ham preparations); alcohol tax on top for wines and spirits; 5% VAT | Import duty varies by product category (porcelain, ceramics, glass), to be confirmed by your forwarder; 5% VAT |

## THE LIMITS OF THE MODEL

**A market of 23 million people**
Taiwan will replace neither Japan's nor China's volume.

**A real entry ticket**
25-35% department-store commission, and a promotional calendar to follow.

**A showcase without numbers is useless**
Without sell-out data, you cannot convince Tokyo or Seoul.

**A context to factor in**
Plan safety stock, credit insurance and suitable payment terms.

Sources: TFDA and Taiwan Ministry of Health; PwC Tax Summaries; Team France Export (2026); ByMyFrench country brief.

OUR TAKE

***Set the Taiwan shelf price before choosing the importer. It decides the channel, the margin and how credible your brand looks when you present Taipei to Tokyo or Seoul.***

07 · THE PLAN

# Making Taiwan a showcase that works for all of Asia

1. **Give Taiwan a role**
   Showcase and mid-size volume. Set two or three KPIs: sell-out in showcase doors, media impact, requests from foreign buyers.
2. **Pick an importer covering two channels**
   Premium and food service for fine food; department stores and corporate gifting for tableware.
3. **Create a physical moment**
   A pop-up in a Xinyi department store or at Eslite Spectrum, timed for Mid-Autumn or Lunar New Year.
4. **Export the proof**
   Sell-out, photos, chef and customer feedback, presented to buyers in Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong and Bangkok.

## FOR YOUR CALENDAR

| | |
|---|---|
| 6 FEB 2027 | **Lunar New Year**<br>Peak season for gift boxes, consumer and corporate. |
| 11-14 MAR 2027 | **Taipei International Bakery Show**<br>The meeting point for bakeries and pastry chefs. |
| 23-26 JUN 2027 | **Food Taipei and Taiwan Horeca**<br>Importers, food service and retail in Nangang. |
| OCT.-NOV. | **Department-store anniversaries**<br>The peak for tableware and gifting. |
| 4-5 NOV 2027 | **French Food Days Taiwan**<br>Team France Export programme: pre-qualified B2B meetings with retailers. |

A PROJECT IN TAIWAN?

## A 30-minute Taiwan diagnostic

Free, no commitment. You leave with: the role Taiwan should play in your Asia plan, the first channel to open, a target retail price, and three importer profiles to approach.

Book my diagnostic ›

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Scan to book

## SOURCES (CLICKABLE)

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