



 **FORMOSA PASSPORT**

# The Complete Guide to Claiming Taiwanese Citizenship by Descent

For overseas Taiwanese in the United States

**A free guide by Formosa Passport**

Updated for the 2024 rule change · For informational purposes only

## A historic window has opened

As of January 2024, a long-standing barrier was removed. Overseas Taiwanese — people with at least one Taiwanese parent — can now obtain **full Taiwanese citizenship** without the previous year-long residency requirement.

Previously, a person in this position could obtain a **National Without Household Registration (NWOHR)** passport, but that document did not grant residency or household registration. To become a full citizen, they first had to live in Taiwan for 366 consecutive days without leaving the country — an obstacle that made citizenship impractical for most.

Under the current rules, that residency requirement has been eliminated. An eligible applicant can now secure an NWOHR passport abroad and then spend only a **few weeks in Taiwan** to convert it into a full Taiwan passport and National ID. For hundreds of thousands of people in the diaspora, citizenship is suddenly within reach.

## Are you eligible?

You are likely eligible to pursue citizenship by descent if you meet the following criteria:

### General eligibility

- At least one parent held household registration in Taiwan at the time of your birth.
- You hold citizenship in a country that permits dual nationality with Taiwan (for example, the United States), allowing you to retain your original citizenship.
- If you are male and aged 18–36, you have reviewed Taiwan's military conscription rules and any applicable exemptions for overseas nationals.

Every family situation is different. Marriage timing, how a parent was registered, and document availability can all affect your path. A short eligibility review is the fastest way to know exactly where you stand.

## The journey at a glance

The process unfolds in three phases. The first two are completed in the United States; the third is completed during a short trip to Taiwan.

Phase	Where	What happens
-------	-------	--------------

<b>I. NWOHR Passport</b>	United States (TECO)	Authenticate your birth certificate and apply for your NWOHR Taiwan passport.
<b>II. Document Package</b>	United States	Obtain an FBI background check and health check, then translate and authenticate everything.
<b>III. Finalize in Taiwan</b>	Taiwan (NIA, HHR, BOCA)	Obtain residency, household registration, and National ID, then exchange your passport.

Note: Fees, processing times, and requirements change periodically. Always confirm current details with your local office before you begin.

## Securing your NWOHR passport

You apply for your NWOHR passport from where you live — not in Taiwan. In the U.S., this is handled at a **Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office (TECO)**. There are 12 TECO offices across the country, plus the national representative office (TECRO) in Washington, D.C. Each office can differ slightly, so we strongly recommend calling or emailing your office in advance to confirm exactly what to bring.

### Step 1 — Authenticate your birth certificate

Your birth certificate must be authenticated by the TECO office that serves the state where you were *born* (which may differ from where you live). If your parents were married in the U.S. rather than Taiwan, their marriage certificate must also be authenticated by the TECO serving the state where they married. If your parents were married in Taiwan and you have a notarized copy of their household registration, separate authentication of the marriage certificate is generally not required.

#### Bring to TECO (in person)

- Original document(s) to be authenticated
- Valid government photo ID matching the name on your birth certificate
- Photocopies of your parents' government photo IDs (matching the names on your birth certificate)
- Photocopy of parents' marriage certificate or household registration
- Completed and signed application form
- Authentication fee (approx. US\$15 per document)

#### If applying by agent or by mail — also include

- By agent:** a notarized Letter of Authorization / Power of Attorney, the agent's valid photo ID, and a notarized photocopy of your photo ID
- By mail:** original or notarized photocopy of your photo ID, a money order for the fee, and a self-addressed stamped return envelope (certified or express recommended)

Authentication typically takes about 1–2 weeks, plus mailing time if you ask for documents to be returned by post.

### Step 2 — Apply for your NWOHR passport

Once your birth certificate (and, if needed, marriage certificate) is authenticated, you apply for the NWOHR passport itself at the TECO office nearest your *state of residence*.

### **Bring to TECO**

- Authenticated birth certificate (from Step 1)
- Original or notarized parents' marriage certificate — or, if married in Taiwan, a household registration transcript issued within the last three months
- Original or notarized copies of parents' Taiwan passports
- Photocopies of parents' U.S. passports (if applicable)
- Three Taiwan passport photos (45 mm × 35 mm)
- Application fee (approx. US\$45) and completed, signed form

Processing typically takes about 6–8 weeks before your passport is ready for pickup.

## Assembling your document package

Before traveling to Taiwan, you must gather several documents, translate them, and have them authenticated. These can be done in any order — but mind the expiration windows:

**Critical timing:** Your health check is valid for only **3 months**; your FBI background check is valid for **1 year**. Schedule your appointments and your Taiwan trip so neither expires before you finish.

### FBI background check

1. Request an FBI Identity History Summary through the FBI's online portal; you will receive a secure link and PIN by email.
2. Have your fingerprints taken at a participating USPS location — results are usually emailed within the hour.
3. Forward the results PDF and the PIN email to the TECRO consular office, and mail the supporting package below.

#### Mail to TECRO (Washington, D.C.)

- Authentication application form
- Photocopy of your U.S. passport
- Photocopy of your new NWOHR Taiwan passport (if received)
- Printout of the FBI report plus the PIN email for cross-reference
- Stamped, self-addressed return envelope
- Money order / cashier's check for the fee (approx. US\$15)

TECRO typically returns your authenticated FBI check by mail in about 4 weeks. From that point, you have one year to complete the process in Taiwan.

### Health check

The health check may be completed in the U.S. or in Taiwan. Completing it in Taiwan is far cheaper (often around US\$20 versus up to ~US\$400 with a U.S. civil surgeon), though it adds a little time on the ground.

- If doing it in the U.S., find a certified civil surgeon — clinics in your city's Chinatown are often familiar with these requirements.
- Confirm in advance that they can complete the official form *and* apply a hospital stamp.
- Complete the required blood test and X-rays; results usually return within a week.

- Have the physician sign the form and provide the original supporting results.

Remember: the health check is valid for only 3 months, so time it close to your trip.

## Translation & final authentication

Your two English documents — the FBI check and birth certificate — must be translated into Chinese and authenticated. (The health-check form is bilingual and does not require translation, but if done in the U.S. it must still be authenticated.)

### Translation best practices

- For your own name, use your given Chinese name rather than a phonetic spelling of your English name.
- For foreign names without a Chinese name, use a phonetic transliteration.
- Match your translation's formatting — lines, spacing, layout — to the original document as closely as possible.

### Bring to TECO for final authentication

- Original birth certificate with Step 1 authentication attached, plus your translation
- Original FBI check with TECRO authentication attached, plus your translation
- Original completed health-check form with original test results
- Authentication fee (approx. US\$15 per document)

## Optional: the expedited path (定居證複本)

There is an expedited route that can reduce time in Taiwan from roughly 8–10 business days to 3–5. It involves applying for a duplicate residency certificate (定居證複本) at TECO before you travel. Processing can take around 8 weeks, and the procedure changes frequently — confirm current details with your local office before relying on it.

## Finalizing your citizenship

With your authenticated, translated documents in hand, it is time to travel. Plan for a minimum of **9 business days** in Taiwan (we recommend 10 to be safe), unless you used the expedited path.

**At the airport:** Enter Taiwan using your **NWOHR passport** on the resident/citizen lane, and make sure it is physically stamped with your entry date. Once you begin Step 1 below, you cannot leave Taiwan until you have your new full passport — and you must depart on that new passport.

### Step 1 — Residency certificate (定居證)

Visit a National Immigration Agency (NIA) office with your complete document set.

#### Bring to the NIA

- Originals and one full set of copies of all translated/authenticated documents
- Authenticated health check; authenticated & translated birth certificate and FBI check
- Your NWOHR passport (with entry stamp) and your U.S. passport
- Your parents' Taiwan passports and National ID (身分證) cards
- Proof of ability to establish household residency (joining a parent is easiest — bring their original 戶口名簿)
- Two Taiwan passport photos (45 mm × 35 mm) and cash (about NT\$1,000)

The counter appointment usually takes under 20 minutes, but processing the certificate takes about **7 business days**. Call the NIA as soon as it opens after day seven to confirm pickup.

### Step 2 — Household registration (戶口名簿) & National ID (身分證)

With your residency certificate, go to the household registration office in the district where you will register — most easily by joining a parent who holds current (non-expired) household registration.

#### Bring to the household registration office

- 定居證 (from Step 1)
- Parents' 戶口名簿 (original preferred)
- One Taiwan passport photo (45 mm × 35 mm) and cash (about NT\$300)

This visit typically takes 1–2 hours, and you walk out with your household registration and National ID. **At this point you are officially a citizen of Taiwan** — but you must still complete Step 3 to

leave the country.

### Step 3 — Exchange for your full Taiwan passport

Finally, visit the Bureau of Consular Affairs (BOCA) to apply for your full Taiwan passport. If you finish Step 2 in the morning, you can often reach BOCA the same day.

#### Bring to BOCA

- Your new National ID (身分證)
- Your NWOHR passport
- Two Taiwan passport photos (45 mm × 35 mm) and cash

Standard turnaround is about 10 days (around NT\$1,300). An expedited next-business-day option is usually available for an additional fee. At pickup, your old NWOHR passport is returned with the corner clipped, alongside your new full passport. You must exit Taiwan on the new passport — but there is no deadline to leave.

**Congratulations — you are now a citizen of Taiwan.**

## Estimated government & third-party fees

Beyond any service fee, these are the real costs charged by TECO, the FBI, U.S. doctors and notaries, and Taiwan offices. Figures are approximate, in USD, and vary by location and choices.

Item	Estimated cost
TECO birth-certificate authentication	~\$15
NWOHR passport application	~\$45
Passport photos (US)	~\$15
FBI background check (FBI ~\$18 + USPS fingerprinting ~\$50)	~\$68
FBI report authentication (TECRO)	~\$15
Health check — U.S. civil surgeon (bloods + X-ray)	~\$400
— or a health check in Taiwan instead	~\$20
Document translation	~\$60
Final TECO authentication (3 documents)	~\$45
Notary fees	~\$40
Taiwan: residency certificate (定居證)	~\$31
Taiwan: household registration + National ID	~\$10
Taiwan: full passport (BOCA)	~\$41
Taiwan: photos & misc.	~\$25
<b>Estimated total (with a Taiwan health check)</b>	<b>~\$500</b>
<b>Estimated total (with a U.S. health check)</b>	<b>~\$850</b>

## Common mistakes that cost months

- **Wrong TECO office.** Birth-certificate authentication must go through the office serving your *birth* state, not your home state.
- **Expired documents.** The 3-month health check is the most common timing failure — sequence it last.

- **Translation errors.** Incorrect name handling or formatting leads to rejected documents.
- **Leaving Taiwan mid-process.** Once you apply for residency, you cannot depart until your new passport is issued.
- **Incomplete parent documents.** Missing or expired parental household registration is a frequent roadblock.

### Don't want to navigate this alone?

Formosa Passport coordinates the entire process — TECO authentication, translations, and the Taiwan-side steps — so you avoid the delays above. We even offer an in-person guide in Taiwan for non-Mandarin speakers.

Start with a free eligibility check or a 15-minute consult at  
[formosapassport.com](https://formosapassport.com)

This guide is provided by Formosa Passport for general informational purposes only and is based on first-hand experience and publicly available information as of early 2024. It is not legal advice, and it does not guarantee any outcome. Requirements, fees, and processing times are set by TECO, TECRO, the National Immigration Agency, household registration offices, and the Bureau of Consular Affairs, and may change at any time. Always verify current requirements with the relevant office before acting. Formosa Passport is a private concierge and document-coordination service and is not a law firm. © Formosa Passport.