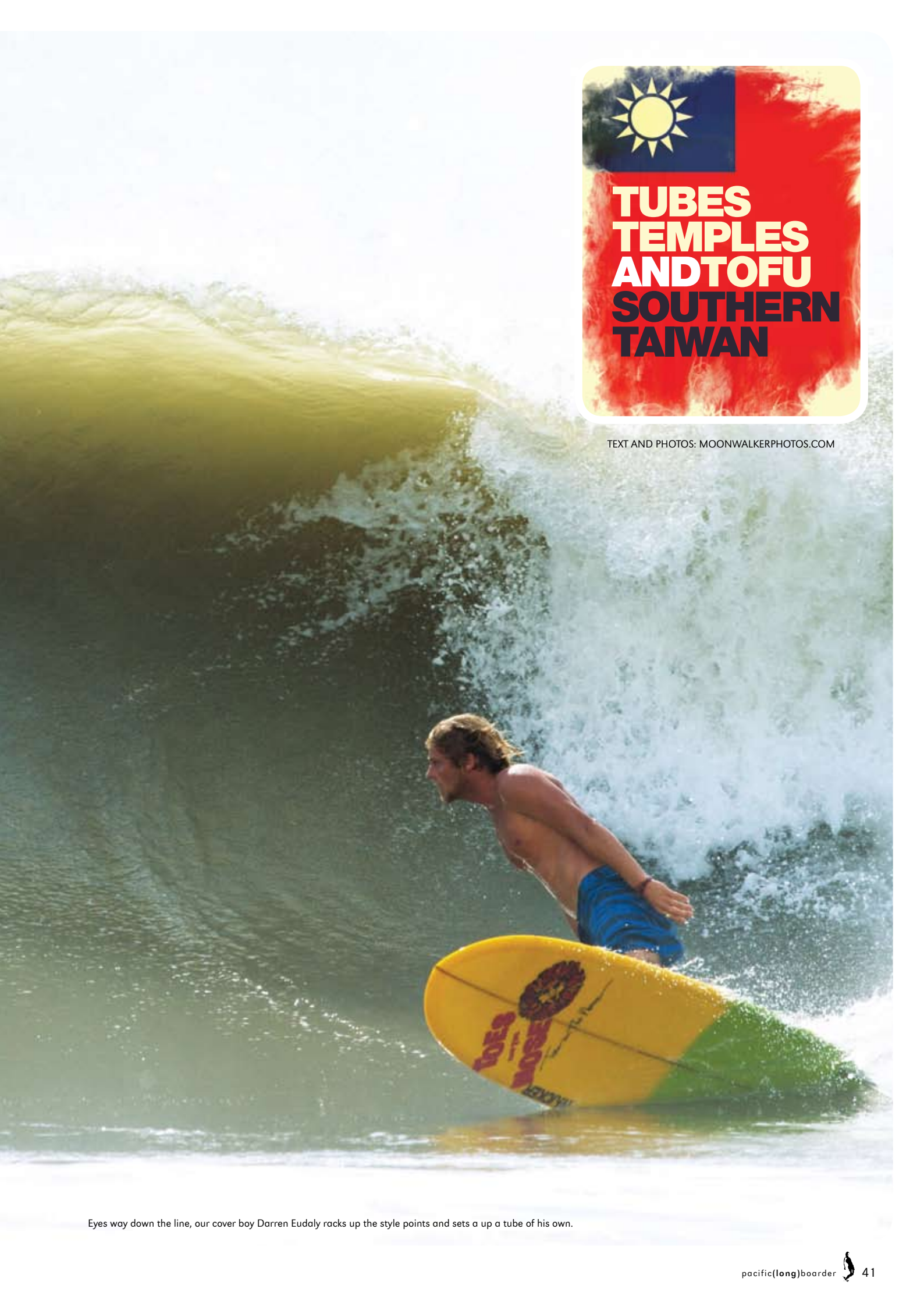




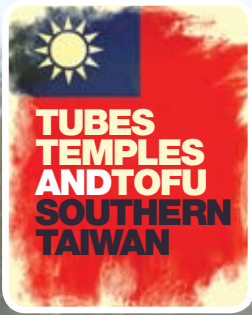
Ruben Roxburgh (Top) and Taylor Jensen (Bottom) locked into some highly unexpected Taiwanese freight-train barrels.



**TUBES
TEMPLES
AND TOFU
SOUTHERN
TAIWAN**

TEXT AND PHOTOS: MOONWALKERPHOTOS.COM

Eyes way down the line, our cover boy Darren Eudaly racks up the style points and sets up a tube of his own.



(above) Waiting for the wrap, Taylor well positioned. (bottom left) A great way to end the first day, Taylor wheelchair-bound. (bottom right) Cool Karma. Ruben getting 'his Buddah-funk on.

Three white guys sitting in wheelchairs in a hospital foyer on the first day of an overseas surf trip is never a good sign. Although it was pretty amusing for the locals, checking out inexperienced operators manoeuvring the wheeled mechanisms with much crushing of fingers, cursing and laughing.

Closer observation however would reveal one genuinely grimacing individual huddled avoiding the collisions. Californian Taylor Jensen, too lanky by far to fit in a Taiwanese wheelchair, was trying to compress his 6'4" frame into the seat while simultaneously raising his severely sprained ankle to stop it from ballooning more than it already had.

Rewind barely an hour and he was happily pulling into peeling, solid head-high barrels having the saltwater time of his life – christening his new board with spitting tubes. That was until some slight mistiming; "I pulled in and the thick lip landed right on the front of my board, my foot was already as flat to the deck as it could be, my knee was locked in and the wave just compressed me, I tried to readjust, but I was already done for. I heard a loud pop and that was it for my ankle." Taylor continues, smiling through gritted teeth. "I was so looking forward to this trip, but was only expecting waist to chest high, fun waves, maybe like a Bali beachbreak without the crowd. I definitely

didn't expect to show up and get solid standups – it was an unbelievable surprise."

It's always a bummer to be injured on a trip, especially on the first day. But if you're destined to go down there's no better way to do it than threading empty tubes with just you and your friends. But while one member of the troupe was down, the ocean refused to go flat in sympathy. Aussie Ruben Roxburgh and Californian Darren Eudaly looked after their mate by going surfing, bringing the sulking hulk back food and pain-numbing beer and babbling incessantly about how good their surfs had been. It's hard, if not impossible, to stay quiet after a perfect surf.





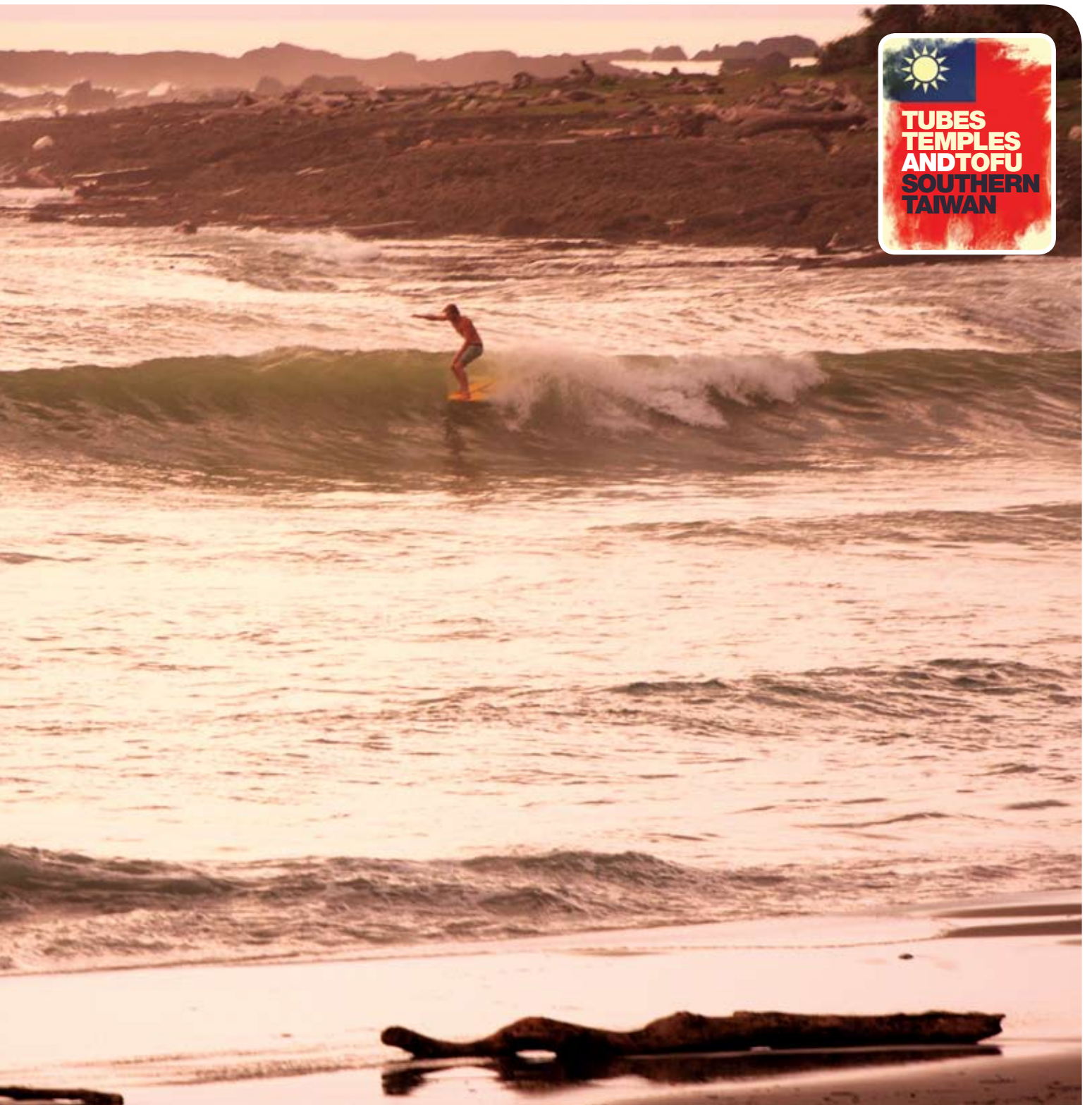
(top) Arms a flappin', Darren ducking, tucking and doing all he can to keep up with the pace. Bottom turns and barrels were the order.
(above) Ruben splits the peak. (below) Even finding a few hollow enough to slot his SUP.






Down south – options galore.






**TUBES
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(above) Ruben smashing his self-painted 9'0" Picasso off the top.

(below) Taiwan; from blue water to a world-class aquarium, who'd have thought? A friendly Beluga whale welcomes Darren and Ruben.

In the evenings they all sat around just a little stunned by Taiwan . . . "How good's *this* place?!" Mind you, this was only *after* running past the odd stinky tofu stand with fingers pinching their noses and refusing to inhale.

Said Darren: "I expected Taiwan to be tropical with a few waves, the reality was piping rights, draining beachbreaks and point waves. At least I got the tropical bit right. The place is gorgeous, the people are really nice and the warm climate and water are ridiculously good. The waves were pretty fast, not really any burgers, I was stoked on that, plus there's waves on every coast, east, south and west – we

surf'd somewhere different almost every day. I found the cultural shift just plain weird – people burning pots of money, the fake paper money they offer to the gods, I really didn't expect that, but it was cool to see. Similar I reckon to the offerings the Balinese make every morning. In Taiwan, burning incense, praying to the gods and burning money is their way of linking themselves to that higher power. A bit of a culture shock; you definitely won't find me burning any money in front of my house." Mind you, with the way the US dollar is heading these days he won't have to.

When not in the water the lads played tourist, freaking out a local quad bike

hire-guy by finding jumps on a near flat beach and going faster on his fleet than anyone has managed before. They went skeet shooting, Darren country hick style with wads of chewing tobacco wedged in cheeks and Ruben grinning like a maniac at the sheer power of the shotgun - it was his first time shooting. The boys also made friends with a beluga whale at the National Aquarium, did a bit of flatwater SUPing, snorkelled, marvelled at temples (getting quiver shots outside as bemused monks looked on), cruised the night markets, and generally spent most of their time in stitches. Actually I've never seen any crew laugh so much on a surf trip before.



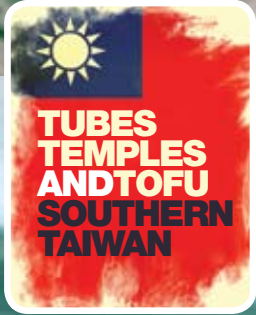


Darren paddled out here on his log, not realizing it was head-high. After taking a few drops and ripping the bag out of the sets, he commented; "Damn, wish I'd brought my HP out!"



Temple, quiver and mortal Darren – with some kitsch nightmarket sunnies.
 (above right) As if a serious ankle injury was going to keep Taylor out of the water. Strapped and tucking in Aloia style. He lasted two waves before a lip landed on it leaving him hobbling up the beach for painkillers, six of them, rich in vitamin B. Beer.
 (right) If these guys were The Three Amigos, that singing bush wouldn't have stood a chance.





California has produced many stylish surfers over many decades – functional, stylish surfers that is. Darren Eudaly leads the pack today. For your viewing pleasure; in-the-pocket noserides and on-rail turns.
(insert) Ready for the rice paddies and in danger of going native, Darren, Taylor and Ruben.





Coming from a tranquil Northern NSW beach town, Ruben was wrapt with the surf scene and culture shift in general: "When asked on this trip I wasn't thinking typhoon swells and relaxed tropical Asian culture. On arriving I was pleasantly surprised, seeing jungle-covered mountains right down into the Pacific Ocean and points, beachies and mini reefs scattered along the coast. The locals were only too happy to share their relatively new sport and welcomed us to each break, although there was often a vacant break just around the next corner!"

But all was not well in paradise. Sipping a beer on the final day, Taylor reflected: "It was pretty devastating to be sitting injured on the beach for the rest of the trip watching

Darren and Ruben surfing four to six foot perfect waves. I finally snapped and rode my alaia on my belly on a few small ones. If I'd been healthy I'd have been more pumped on the amount of surf we found. Even on days that weren't as epic as our first they were still really good compared to many places I've been. There would have been 150 people out at some of the breaks if they'd have been in the US or Oz. Often it was just Darren and Ruben, they had to pinch themselves!

"I found the culture really interesting too. The best way I can describe it is Japan meets Mexico. I mean the writing and all the signs make no sense whatsoever and nobody speaks English - I'm glad I didn't

have to find my own way around. South Taiwan's definitely an untapped surf area for the western world I reckon. Ankle aside, this was an awesome trip."

Ruben, while not normally prone to drinking much beer, couldn't resist a cool beverage in the tropical afternoon, adding; "We've been treated to such a well-rounded experience of this surf-laden island. Accommodating people, friendly smiles . . . Taiwan is definitely a worthy place on any surfing bucket list, I'll be coming back for sure." *

Massive thanks to the Taiwan surf tour experts - SurfTaiwan.com

