The Great Hall 大雄寶殿

at Fo Guang Shan 佛光山



Fo Guang Shan Monastery and the Great Hall.

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The Buddhist center at Fo Guang Shan is a major travel destination in Taiwan. In fact it is one of the island's top tourist attraction. In particular it contains the most visited museum. The complex is located around 45 minutes from Taiwan's second-largest city, Kaohsiung. Fo Guang Shan is actually three distinct adjacent sites— the Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum 佛光山佛陀紀念館, the Fo Guang Shan Sutra Repository 佛光山藏經樓 , and the Fo Guang Shan Monastery 佛光山寺. The Buddha Museum is so extensive that many visitors never make it to the other two sites. This is a shame, since all are worth a visit.

Three Sites, One Fo Guang Shan



Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum 佛光山佛陀紀念館.

The Buddha Museum is certainly impressive. Looking down the walkway from the front gate, the image of Amitabha Buddha dominates the skyline. It is indeed a major Buddhist monument, stately and awe-inspiring. But it is not the newest addition to Fo Guang Shan. The Museum was opened fifteen years ago, in 2011, following nine years of construction.

The Sutra Repository complex is actually the newer section, since it opened in 2017. It must have held a special place in the heart of Fo Guang Shan's founder, Ven. Hsing Yun. Hsing Yun passed away in 2023. An powerful image inaugurated in March of this year, facing the Repository. It depicts Hsing Yun in full stride, determined yet kind-hearted, clearly full of his mission to spread the Dharma. This image is a fitting commemoration to this historically important figure.



Interior of the Fo Guang Shan Sutra Repository 佛光山藏經樓.



Memorial Statue of Venerable Master Hsing Yun (星雲大師紀念雕像), Hsing Yun Memorial Park, facing the Fo Guang Shan Sutra Repository. The memorial park was inaugurated in March 2026.

The Monastery and the Great Hall

After having visited Fo Guang Shan several times I am increasingly liable to give the Museum complex a pass and go directly to the monastery. The standing Guan Yin in the side garden is impressive but not at the same level of artistic expression as the Amitabha in the Museum complex. However the images in the monastery's Great Hall give the visitor an experience of subtle beauty as well as grandeur. This is a structure well worth visiting, and one fully in step with the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism.



Main gate, Fo Guang Shan Monastery.

Originally established in 1967, it is the oldest part of Fo Guang Shan. It was refurbished with great care and rededicated in May of 2026, in time to commemorate Fo Guang Shan's 60th anniversary.



The restored Main Shrine (大雄寶殿), Fo Guang Shan, at its rededication ceremony, May 2026.



Beam-raising Ceremony, September 2025.

The Three Buddhas 三寶佛



The Three Buddhas (三寶佛): Medicine Buddha, Śākyamuni Buddha, and Amitābha Buddha, Main Shrine.

The Hall contains large images of the three primary Buddha images typically found in Mahayana monasteries: Śākyamuni in the center, representing the Sahā world; Medicine Buddha to his right, representing the Eastern Pure Lapis Lazuli world, and Amitābha to his left, representing the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. These three are gold-plated and exquisitely sculpted. Finely carved latticework screens added a touch of refinement to the ceilings in front of each image. These images alone would mark Fo Guang Shan as a major Buddha site.



The principal altar and one of the Buddha-covered walls of the Main Shrine.

Walls of Buddhas

But there is more. The surrounding wall space is filled with more artistic wonders. The walls contain 14,800 smaller images of Sakyamuni, each in a niche. These images come in two or three sizes, which breaks up the repetitive monotomy and creates rhythm flow as the visitor gazes up. Each image marks a donation from a devout follower.



The Main Shrine's walls contain 14,800 small images of Śākyamuni Buddha.



Monastics conduct a purification rite during the reinstallation of the Main Shrine's 14,800 Buddha images, January 2026.



2026 EASSSR participants in the Great Hall.

Song of the Ten Practices and Cultivations

In the Great Hall, visitors are given bookmark-sized printouts with this message. The ten practices express Venerable Master Hsing Yun's own moral standard, distinct from the Mahayana Ten Perfections.

Venerable Master Hsing Yun

Practice One: Don't be calculative.

Practice Two: Don't compare.

Practice Three: Be polite.

Practice Four: Always smile.

Practice Five: Don't worry about being disadvantaged.

Practice Six: Be honest and kind.

Practice Seven: Be carefree.

Practice Eight: Speak good words.

Practice Nine: Befriend honorable people.

Practice Ten: Everyone be the Buddha.

If everyone tries these ten practices, we shall live in the Buddha's Pure Land of joy and carefreeness.

十休歌

星雲大師 著

一修人我不計較，

二修彼此不比較

三修處事有禮貌

四修見人要微笑

五修吃虧不要緊

六修待人要厚道

七修心內無煩惱

八修口中多說好

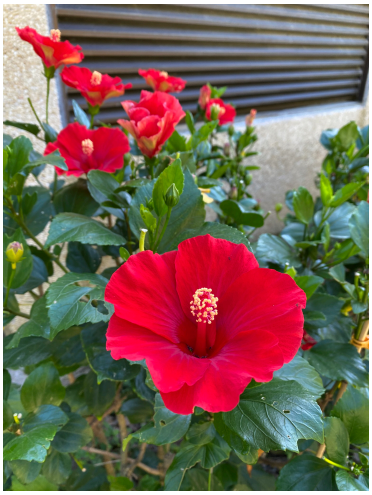
九修所交皆君子

十修大家成佛道

若使人人能十修，佛國淨土樂逍遙

Beyond the Great Hall

Other functional buildings surround the Main Hall. The main dining hall, able to seat over a thousand in one sitting, is impressive. Another building sports Burmese-style white jade Buddhas sitting in niches in its walls, facing toward the world.



Hibiscus in the monastery grounds.



The Dining Hall.



Façade with jade Buddhas in niches.



A jade Buddha.



Going to breakfast.

Visitors and the Sangha



Venerable Hsin Bau (心保和尚), Head Abbot of Fo Guang Shan, with visiting participants, July 2026.

Participants in the recent EASSSR conference held at Fo Guang Shan were able to meet the abbot, Hsin Bau. Hisn Bao became Fo Guang Shan's ninth abbot in 2013, and was re-elected in 2018 and 2024.



The 2026 EASSSR conference attendees visit the Sangha.



Academics from the 2026 EASSSR conference participating in morning chanting.

Hsing Yun and the Beginnings of Fo Guang Shan

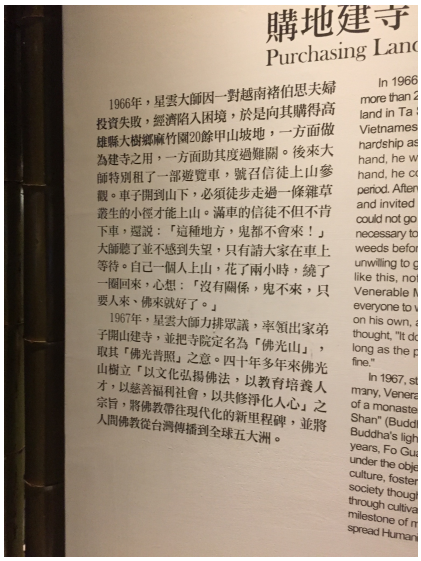
Hsing Yun was born in China and spent the first part of his monastic career engaged in publishing. Hsing Yun was a follower of Ven. Zhi Kai, who accepted only one disciple, Hsing Yun.



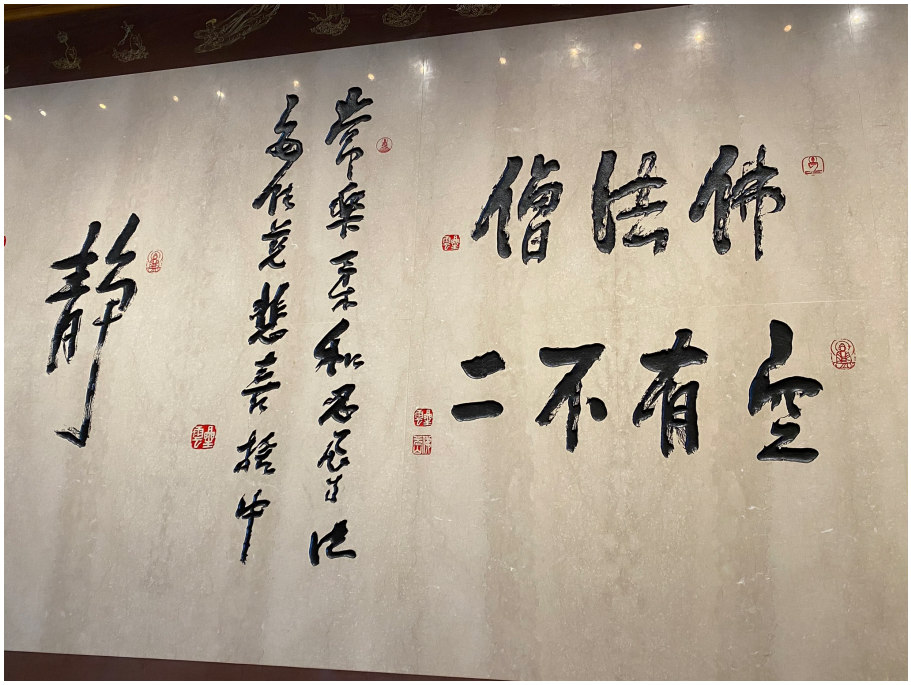
Qixia Monastery, where Hsing Yun first took his vows.



Ven. Zhi Kai (志開上人), Hsing Yun's Master.



The original land purchase.



Hsing Yun's calligraphy.

A Work in Process

The Fo Guang Shan property first became available after a failed development in 1966. Hsing Yun arranged to purchase the 20-mou area and began the long process of funding the complex. Fo Guang Shan remains a work-in-process, constantly adding services and facilities. Already there are conference halls, world-class exhibition spaces, several universities and training centers, and, in the Repository Hall, space for visiting scholars to work undisturbed (as long as they wish!). The Museum complex also contains a tourism-centric shopping center and restaurant complex. But there are also hostel facilities in the Monastery.



Bird-eye view of the Great Hall and other facilities, Fo Guang Shan.



Main Entrance to the Great Hall.