

Travel in

2021
NOV & DEC

TAIWAN

No. 108

GOOD FOOD
THREE MICHELIN-STARRED
RESTAURANTS IN TAIPEI

CYCLING IN TAIWAN
AROUND THE SHIMEN RESERVOIR
IN TAOYUAN

LOCAL LIFESTYLE
NATURE LOVER AND
PHOTOGRAPHER RYAN HEVERN

TAOYUAN HSINCHU

Marvelous Mountain Lalashan
Experience Hakka Culture in Hsinchu
Taoyuan Small Town Exploration





Let's follow the Sea Breeze: Travel to Yun-Chia-Nan!

Yunlin, Chiayi, Tainan 2-Day Tour

The counties of Yunlin, Chiayi, and Tainan in southwest Taiwan are known for their beautiful coastal areas.

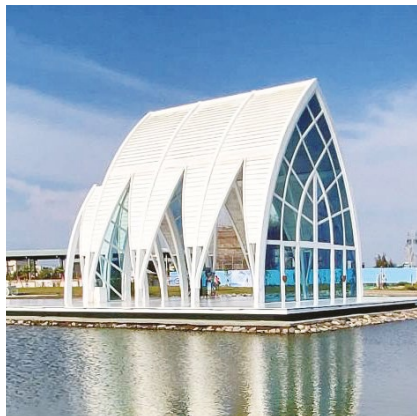
In **Yunlin's Kouhu Township** visitors can enjoy visits to a secluded manmade lake, explore an eco-rich wetland area, and try local specialties.

In **Chiayi's Budai Township** you can go on a Sea Bus cruise to learn about marine ecology, enjoy excellent seafood, and stay in a cultural-creative hotel.

In **Tainan's Jiangjun Harbor** feast on seafood BBQ, learn about the old salt industry at Beimen, visit a crystal church, and take in the mesmerizing scenery of the Jingzaijiao Tile-Paved Salt Fields.

Experiencing sun, sea, wind, and local culture is what traveling in the southwest of Taiwan is all about.

There is no better place to get up close to Taiwan's fishing communities than the southwest coast!



Day 1

Matige Hall - Enter the water and dig up clams, get a taste of the biggest clams in Taiwan

Lunch: Farm Village Community Shop - Enjoy countryside-flavor cuisine

Visit a secluded manmade lake

ORZ Shrimp Club - Have fun catching and eating shrimp

Explore the Chenglong Wetlands - Landscape art and unforgettable sunsets

Dinner: Happy Seafood Restaurant in Budai

Overnight stay: Ocean Hotel in Budai

Day 2

Budai Sea Bus - Marine ecology experience (departure times depending on tide)

Lunch: Hai Zhong Yang Shop - Sea Flavor BBQ

Beimen Washing Salt Factory, Chrystal Church, Jiangzaijiao Tile-Paved Salt Fields

Contact: Jinhu Recreational Farm Development

Association, Kouhu Township, Yunlin County

(雲林縣口湖鄉金湖休閒農業發展協會)

Tel: (05) 790-6601, (05) 790-5101

Add: No. 163, Guangming Rd., Wunan Village,

Kouhu Township, Yunlin County

(雲林縣口湖鄉梧南村光明路 163 號)

E-mail: susun.104@yahoo.com.tw

Website: <https://www.kankujen.com/>



Welcome to Taiwan!



Publisher's Note

Dear Traveler,

There are few greater life pleasures than learning new things about different peoples and places by traveling in person, adding novel, enlightening experiences and adventures to the album of our lives.

Taiwan, perhaps the safest place to travel in all of Asia, continually amazes visitors with the incredible scenic, cultural, and experiential diversity that is available each and every day of your stay. Though not the biggest of destinations, our main and many offshore islands present a mosaic we can proudly say is more kaleidoscopic than your other Asia choices.

Our mosaic of experiences and adventures offered in this *Travel in Taiwan* issue:

In our feature article you'll find yourself way up on **Lalashan**, the "Beautiful Mountain," in the deep-mountain region of Taoyuan City. This renowned getaway destination is known for its "divine" cypress trees, comfy guesthouses with terrific vistas, slope-clinging honey peach orchards, and Atayal-tribe indigenous experiences.

Lalashan is reached via the magisterially scenic Northern Cross-Island Highway. Our secondary feature article showcases things you can get up to in the hilly region around this highway's western end, in Taoyuan's rural **Longtan** and **Daxi** districts.

Taiwan presents you with an endless supply of pleasant cycling experiences, easy through challenging, and in this issue's *Cycling in Taiwan* segment we introduce the easy and breezy cycling fun around the long, impressive **Shimen Reservoir**, close to all the destinations presented in the just-mentioned Longtan/Daxi exploration.

Experience the unique traditional culture of the **Hakka**, a Han Chinese minority people, in our special article on the Hakka hill towns of **Hsinchu County**, which is just south of Taoyuan. Old ways remain dear in these tourist-popular places. Savor the heritage architecture, delicious classic foods and snacks, old multi-generation shops, and other cultural treasures.

Is your preference for new experiences and adventures involving much physical exertion in the great outdoors? Transplant Californian **Ryan Hevern** is your man in Taiwan; meet him in our *Local Lifestyle* column. Hevern serves as point-man for folks, local and from overseas, wishing to get intimate with Taiwan's natural wonders, offering guided hikes, including night hikes and hike/photo workshops combos.

Still hungry for more? Well, find literal appetite satisfaction with our *Good Food* file intro of three selected Taipei restaurants from the newest edition of the **Michelin Red Guide for Taiwan**.

Taiwan – your best Asia destination for experience and adventure tourism!

TAIWAN TOURISM BUREAU
MOTC, R.O.C.

Chang Shi Chung

ON THE COVER




Lalashan Forest Reserve
(Photo by Ray Chang)

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Travel in TAIWAN

台灣觀光雙月刊 Travel in Taiwan

The Official Bimonthly English Magazine of the Taiwan Tourism Bureau (Advertisement)
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 2021
Tourism Bureau, MOTC
First published Jan./Feb. 2004
ISSN: 18177964 GPN: 2009305475
Price: NT\$200

中華郵政台北雜字第1286號執照登記為雜誌交寄
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MAGAZINE IS SOLD AT:

1. Wu-Nan Culture Plaza, No. 6, Zhongshan Rd., Central Dist., Taichung City 40043 886-4-2226-0330
<http://www.wunanbooks.com.tw/>
2. National Bookstore, 1F., No. 209, Songjiang Rd., Zhongshan Dist., Taipei City 10485 886-2-2518-0207
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OF TRAVEL IN TAIWAN

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IN TAIWAN

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ONLINE

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Find back issues (PDF version) on the publication platform
issuu at issuu.com/travelintaiwan.



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Website

PUBLISHER	Taiwan Tourism Bureau
EDITING CONSULTANT	T. C. Chou
PUBLISHING ORGANIZATION	TAIWAN TOURISM BUREAU, MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS
CONTACT	International Division, Taiwan Tourism Bureau Add: 9F, 290 Zhongxiao E. Rd., Sec. 4, Taipei City, 10694, TAIWAN Tel: 886-2-2349-1500 Fax: 886-2-2771-7036 E-mail: tbroc@tbroc.gov.tw Website: http://taiwan.net.tw
PRODUCER	Vision Creative Marketing & Media Co.
ADDRESS	1F, No. 5, Aly. 20, Ln. 265, Sec. 4, Xinyi Rd., Taipei City 10681, Taiwan Tel: 886-2-2325-2323 Fax: 886-2-2701-5531 editor@v-media.com.tw
E-MAIL	
GENERAL MANAGER	David Hu
EDITOR IN CHIEF	Johannes Twellmann
ENGLISH EDITOR	Rick Charette
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & EDITING DEPT	Joe Lee
MANAGING EDITOR	Anna Li
EDITORS	Masako Takada, Sophia Su
CONTRIBUTORS	Rick Charette, Twelli
PHOTOGRAPHERS	Chen Cheng-kuo, Ray Chang, Aska Chi
DESIGNERS	Ian Tsai, Hsieh Yun-jhen
ADMINISTRATIVE DEPT	Lily Wan, Hui-chun Tsai, Xiou Mieng Jiang, Sophie Chen



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Because of the ongoing pandemic, festivals and events might be cancelled or postponed; please check official websites for confirmation.

WINTER TIME

Exciting Events and Happenings

Photo courtesy of Alishan NSA admin.



1

1 CHIAYI CITY January 1, 2022

ALISHAN SUNRISE IMPRESSION CONCERT

阿里山日出印象音樂會

Where do you want to see the first rays of the sun in the year 2021? How about at one of the most famous sunrise-viewing spots in Taiwan? Visitors take the Alishan Forest Railway to the Zhushan sunrise-viewing platform inside the Alishan National Forest Recreation Area each day of the year, but perhaps the best day to go is January 1. To celebrate the occasion, and to warm up the visitors who go on this most likely cold predawn outing, a live classical-music concert has been staged each year since 2002.

Website:

www.ali-nsa.net (Alishan National Scenic Area)

Photo courtesy of Taipei City Govt.



2

2 TAIPEI CITY November 26 ~ December 12

SHILIN RESIDENCE CHRYSANTHEMUM SHOW 士林官邸菊展

The Shilin Residence park in Taipei City's Shilin District (MRT Shilin Station) is the venue for a number of flower shows throughout the year, including events showcasing roses, orchids, tulips, and chrysanthemums. The Chrysanthemum Show is the last flower exhibition every year, attracting large number of flower lovers with chrysanthemums of all sizes and colors. The flowers are presented outdoors and indoors, the outdoor exhibits each year featuring large-scale arrangements that are perfect as photo backdrops.

Website: www.travel.taipei (Taipei City Government)

3 New Taipei City November ~ January

CHRISTMASLAND IN NEW TAIPEI CITY 新北市歡樂耶誕城

Where can you experience a big happy dose of Christmas spirit in the Taipei area in November/December? While in Western countries Christmas is the most important festival of the year, for many in Taiwan, where followers of the Christian faith make up only about 4.5% of the population, it is naturally of lesser importance. There is, however, one big-time Christmas-themed event, called Christmasland, which is held in Banqiao District, New Taipei City. The center of attention each year is a giant artificial Christmas tree, illuminated with a sophisticated light and imagery show. The façade of the New Taipei City Government building also serves as a gigantic canvas for an entertaining animation show.

Website: tour.ntpc.gov.tw (New Taipei City Government)



3



Photo courtesy of Dada Advert. Co.

4 PINGTUNG COUNTY December

PINGTUNG WANJIN CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

屏東萬金聖誕季

Located in the deep countryside of southern Taiwan's Pingtung County, Wanchin Church would not look out of place in a Mexican village. The first edition was built in 1863 by monks of the Dominican Order, and it was rebuilt in 1870 in Spanish fortress architectural style after the original structure was destroyed in an earthquake. In the days leading up to Christmas each year, the church is colorfully illuminated and the street and plaza in front of it beautifully decorated, attracting large numbers of visitors in search of a unique Christmas atmosphere. When visiting the township where the church is located, be sure to try the famous Wanluan pig trotters, a specialty of the area.

Website: www.i-pingtung.com (Pingtung County Government)

5 TAIPEI CITY December

TAIPEI MARATHON

臺北馬拉松

Just a few days before Christmas, which in Taipei means mild temperatures that are perfect for road running, the Taipei Marathon takes place in the heart of the capital. This is for many local athletes the highlight of the annual race calendar, and entry slots can be hard to come by, with the number of participants in the full marathon limited to 8,000 runners; 20,000 are allowed to run the half-marathon. The races start and end at Taipei City Hall, with the route following along some of the city's main thoroughfares.

Website: www.travel.taipei (Taipei City Government)



Photo courtesy of Taipei City Govt.

6 TAIPEI CITY December 31

TAIPEI NEW YEAR'S EVE COUNTDOWN PARTY

臺北最HIGH新年城-跨年晚會

Around the world, the end of each year is celebrated with a countdown and fireworks, and Taiwan is no exception. The most spectacular of the pyrotechnic shows on the island is without a doubt the one that makes the sky-reaching Taipei 101 tower erupt in a sea of sparkling and exploding lights. The fireworks display is accompanied by a high-tech LED display on one of the giant faces of the city's towering landmark. Throughout the evening lead-up to the spectacular, the crowds are entertained by some of the best-known and most popular local music artists.

Website: www.travel.taipei (Taipei City Government)



Photo courtesy of New Taipei City Tourism and Travel Dept.



Photo by Wu Zhi-xue



Taiwan Tourism Events
Calendar Website

HAPPENING in TAIWAN Now

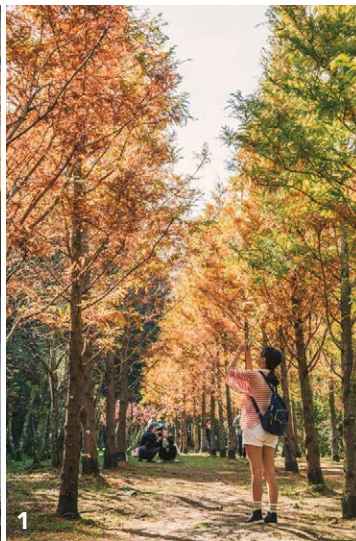


We are approaching the end of 2021. The winter months bring cooler temperatures and spells of chilly and wet days in the north, while it usually stays pleasantly warm and dry in the southern half of the island. In the high mountains you can experience freezing conditions, with the occasional chance of snowfall.



2

Photo courtesy of Forestry Bureau



1

NATURE APPRECIATION NOVEMBER~JANUARY

- ❶ Enjoy the warming shades of brown, yellow, and orange when the leaves of **bald cypress trees** (for example at the high-mountain Wuling Farm) and **maple trees** (for example in the Aowanda National Forest Recreation Area) change their colors during the winter months.
- ❷ **Taipingshan** in southern Yilan is a wonderland of natural attractions no matter which season you visit. In winter, visit this mountain's forest recreation area to be amazed by magnificent sunrises, sunsets, and seas of clouds.

New Cultural-Creative Hub in Lugang

One of the latest of the numerous cultural-creative centers established around Taiwan in recent years is the **Huo Xing Youth Start-up Hub** in the old town of Lugang, Changhua County. A cluster of eight old dormitory houses in the town's center were restored and given a new purpose, the new center joining other major attractions in central Lugang such as the Longshan Temple, Lukang Folk Arts Museum, and Old Street area. Apart from appreciating the heritage buildings, visitors can also browse nine boutiques run by young entrepreneurs, selling designer and handicraft items as well as artisan snack foods. As well, a part of the complex is now home to the small Lugang Salt Industry Museum, which has an interactive exhibition about an industry that once was important in this part of Taiwan. <https://bit.ly/3jIVvU>



Photo courtesy of Changhua County Govt.



Photo courtesy of Ho-Ping Power Co.

New Small Tourist Attraction on the East Coast

Between the port town of Su'ao and the city of Hualien on the East Coast, towering mountains reach right to the Pacific Ocean's edge, presenting the visitor with breathtaking views of vertical cliffs and leaving little room for settlements. Two of the few villages in this area are Aohua (in Yilan County) and, across a river, Heping (in Hualien County), the latter dominated by a massive Taiwan Cement plant complex. The cement company not long ago opened the DAKA rest stop area in Heping, with a food court and stalls selling indigenous handicrafts. Just 4km north along Prov Hwy 9 is another recent DAKA project, the **Hanben Ocean Service Station**. Yilan's southernmost Coast Guard station has been prettified (brightly painted by young indigenous artists from Aohua) and the first floor turned into a cozy rest stop space. Outside is a large swing (seating 5), allowing you to experience what it feels like "flying out to the ocean." www.tccdaka.com (Chinese)

New Hotels +



Photos courtesy of hotels

1. Hotel Moon

Location: At the popular pebble beach at Qixingtian, immediately north of Hualien City; grand opening October 2021.

hotelmoon.com.tw (Chinese)

2. Hotel Day+ Sun Moon Lake

Location: At Sun Moon Lake in Nantou County; grand opening September 2021.

www.hotelday.com.tw

Hot Spring Season

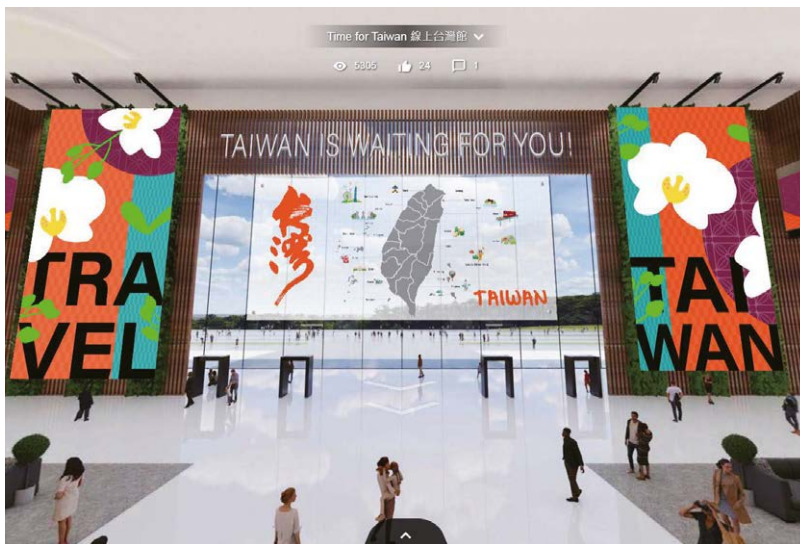
Soaking in hot springs is one of the great pleasures to experience while visiting Taiwan. It is possible to dip into hot-spring pools even during the height of summer (there are cold springs on the island too), but winter is certainly the prime soaking season. Not only do the cooler temperatures make a dip more appealing, many hot-spring resort hotels and restaurants generously offer special discount packages during this time of the year. To find out more about where to enjoy a soak, and where to find good hot-spring deals, visit taiwanhotspring.net.



Virtual Travel Exhibition

As a response to the time and space restrictions caused by measures taken to fight the global pandemic, the "Time for Taiwan – Virtual Exhibition" has been created by the Taiwan Tourism Bureau. Online until August 2022, it features a ton of diverse information about themed travel, videos, introductions to tourist attractions and tours around Taiwan, as well as details on businesses offering fine cuisine, accommodation, shopping, as well as travel and transportation services. Travelers and members of the travel industry from around the world can make use of this platform to gather information related to travel in Taiwan in the fastest and most convenient way.

www.timefortaiwan.com.tw



Because of the ongoing pandemic, festivals and events might be cancelled or postponed; please check official websites for confirmation.

Culture

Concerts, Theater, Exhibitions,
Festivals, Shows

Exhibition

Bon Voyage! Buni

南安小熊安在否

One of the most beloved mammals of Taiwan's natural world is the Formosan black bear (*Ursus thibetanus formosanus*), easily recognized by the distinct white V-shaped mark on its chest. There are between 200 and 600 left living in the wild, in mountain areas of 1,000m to 3,500m above sea level. This exhibition tells the touching story of one of these bears getting lost, rescued, trained, and released back into the wild. The bear, at the time only 3-4 months old, was found in July 2018 by tourists near Nan'an Waterfall in Hualien County. The mother bear not showing up, it was decided by a team of wildlife experts to take the bear (which they named Little Buni) into human care, and to raise and train him for about nine months to learn the survival skills needed for living in the wild. After his release in April 2019 his whereabouts were monitored for a while, until he managed to rid himself of the collar sending the GPS signal. Little Buni has yet to be sighted again. www.nmns.edu.tw

Until February 27, 2022
National Museum of Natural Science
(Taichung City)



★★★
EDITOR'S
CHOICE



Exhibition

Branching Phenomenon

枝枒現象

Until January 1, 2022
Gold Museum (New Taipei City)

This exhibition showcases fine examples of metal arts and jewelry design, both online and inside the Gold Museum in the former mining village of Jinguashi in New Taipei City. The online exhibition displays amazing works by a large number of artists from Taiwan, some in the form of turning 3D images, allowing viewers to observe the objects from different angles. The offline exhibition presents creations by twelve younger artists from Taiwan who are in tune with current artistic trends and international developments.

www.gep-en.ntpc.gov.tw;
www.mustdesign.biz/METALCRAFT

Circus Performances

Weiwuying Circus Platform

衛武營馬戲平台

November 26~28
National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts (Weiwuying)
(Kaohsiung City)



Photo courtesy of NKCA

The Weiwuying Circus Platform provides a stage for Taiwan's most talented circus artists. Over three days, spectators are entertained with a variety of exciting performances that combine acrobatics and stunts with theater and dance elements. Two shows, *Circus as Folks* by Formosa Circus Art and *#Since1994* by Eye Catching Circus, are being performed inside the Center's Playhouse while four different street acts can be seen (free of charge) outside on the Banyan Plaza below the main building.

www.npac-weiwuying.org

Exhibition

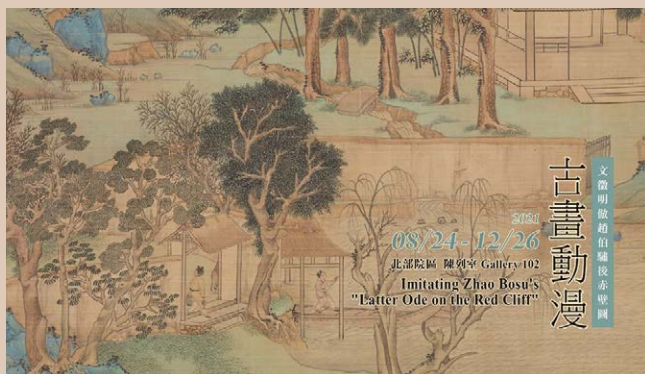
Affect Machine: Self-healing in the Post-Capitalist Era

感性機器：後資本主義時代的自我療癒

Until December 19
Taipei Fine Arts Museum
(Taipei City)

This exhibition presents the audio-visual works of seven artists and art collectives from Taiwan and abroad, including Rebecca Horn (Germany), Chen Chen-Yu, Cam Xanh (Vietnam), John Akomfrah (UK/Ghana), Olafur Eliasson (Iceland/Denmark), Chu Hao-Pei, and Lee Chang-Ming. The artists focus on the meaning of "affect" through body art, multimedia installations, and anthropological explorations into the environment and religions. Visitors are invited to imagine the exhibition as an ensemble of healing machines that help to calm and release tension.

www.tfam.museum



Exhibition

Painting Animation: Imitating Zhao Bosu's "Latter Ode on the Red Cliff"

古畫動漫—明文徵明仿趙伯驥後赤壁圖

Until December 26
National Palace Museum
(Taipei City)

This is a long scroll painting animation, part of a series of high-resolution projections started by the National Palace Museum in 2011. On a wall inside the museum (and online on the museum's website), the painting *Imitating Zhao Bosu's "Latter Ode on the Red Cliff"* by Ming Dynasty painter Wen Zhengming (1470-1559) unfolds and parts of the image are shown in great detail, with moving elements bringing the scenes to life. In the painting, Wen, one of the Four Masters of the Ming, depicts a scene from Su Shi's *Latter Ode on the Red Cliff* (written in 1082) showing Su and two friends near the Red Cliff, site of the famous Battle of the Red Cliff at the end of the Han Dynasty (202 BC-220 AD). The painting is a copy of a painting created by Zhao Bosu (ca. 1132-1182) made to allow the owner of the original to keep his treasure when asked to give it to a local official, who wished to present it to the son of the powerful Grand Secretary Yan Song (1480-1567).

theme.npm.edu.tw/npm_anime/RedCliff/en/index.html

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朱浩培
李長明

AFFECT MACHINE
SELF-HEALING
IN THE POST-CAPITALIST ERA

09.18-12.19
2021
GALLERIES F, E

後資本主義時代的自我療癒

CURATORIAL TEAM
YU-CHEH LI + GLADYS LIN
葉凱傑·李麗華·林曉希

臺北市立美術館
TAIPEI FINE ARTS MUSEUM

2021 NTT
遇見巨人
Fall for Great Souls
10/8-12/26

★★★
EDITOR'S
CHOICE

國立中興歌劇院
National Taichung Theater

Stage Performances

Fall for Great Souls 遇見巨人

Until December 26
National Taichung Theater
(Taichung City)

Since 2017, the NTT has invited "great souls" to perform during the autumn/winter period each year. This time around there will be eight different performances by local troupes, including contemporary theater, Taiwanese, Peking, and Western opera, and modern dance. Among the highlights are an adaption of Shakespeare's *Richard III* with references to Taiwanese modern society; Kafka's *Metamorphosis* told in Peking opera style; and the *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* opera presented in a 20th century black-and-white film style setting.

www.npac-ntt.org/GreatSouls/

LET'S HEAD TO UP-MOUNTAIN COUNTRY

Glory Days on Lalashan, the "Beautiful Mountain"

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE PHOTOS | RAY CHANG

Lalashan is a popular tourist destination in the high-mountain region of north Taiwan. It's in Taoyuan City's far south, a region populated by rugged, brawny mountain giants. Both indigenous Atayal tribesfolk and Han Chinese live on the mountain. Its big tourist draws are massive "divine trees," high-sloped land farms producing delicious fruits, guesthouses with heavenly views, eateries crafting toothsome hearty fare, and edifying indigenous-culture experiences.

Lalashan (Mt. Lala) is officially named Daguanshan or Mt. Dagan, though few use this title. Both terms, *lala* and *dagan*, convey the idea of a mountain of beautiful scenery. The road to the mountain's base is Provincial Highway 7, the Northern Cross-Island Highway, which starts on the island's west side in the town of Daxi. It delivers up tremendous scenery. The first stretch near Daxi is high hills. Then come low mountains starting around Cihu (see our accompanying article on day trips in Taoyuan City's rural Longtan and Daxi districts on page 22). Then, after passing through the Atayal village of Luofu, the road starts to rise, the Dahan River valley deepens, the peaks climb thrillingly higher, and you'll be constantly straining your neck to take everything in as the highway cuts back and forth along the mountainsides. On Lalashan itself are four settlements: Xia (Lower) Baling, Zhong (Middle) Baling, Shang (Upper) Baling, and Kala. The first three have a mixed Han/Atayal population; the last is home to only members of the Atayal. Xia Baling is at the base; Shang Baling (elevation about 1,500m) sits right atop a long ridge that runs up to the main peak (2,031m), providing views into two deep valleys, north and south, at once.

Mountain stream in the
Lalashan Forest Reserve

LALASHAN

Eco-Walks

The Baling Road (Taoyuan County Road 116) takes you up the mountain, twisting its way up the south side to Shang Baling, then running along below the ridgeline on the north side all the way to the divine trees attraction.

Not far up the road, on a tiny plateau, is the attractive **Lalashan Visitor Information Center** with a grand sweeping view west, north, and south. Across the road is the entrance to the **Baling Historic Trail and Ecological Area**. This trail was part of the original trail blazed long ago by the Atayal for descent off the mountain to access other Atayal settlements in the area. It follows the descent line of the aforementioned ridgeline to the valley bottom. Long abandoned after the road was punched through, it has now been rejuvenated, with boardwalk sections and short suspension footbridges enjoyed along the traverse through the broadleaf forest.

Lalashan Visitor Information Center



Butterfly micro museum



As you make your way along, there are stops at a number of welcoming, well-designed micro-museums “hidden” in the trees, in which the area’s geology and the local forest, butterfly, and beetle life are explained.

The trail ends down by Highway 7, before a rock tunnel that leads to the long **Baling Old Bridge**, which leaps a chasm high across the Dahan River. This is an old section of highway now limited to foot traffic. The bridge is just 4.5m wide; the narrow tunnel was hewn by hand when the cross-island highway was built in the early 1960s. The tunnel now serves as an Atayal-culture gallery, with displays of traditional clothing and agri-products as well as paintings.

Traveling along the Baling Road, on the east edge of Shang Baling is the Kala Road opening. This narrow roadway takes you snaking down the steep north face to the valley-bottom Kala River. Right beside the slender waterway, gushing with power during *Travel in Taiwan’s* recent visit because of steady rains, is **Shansu De Guxiang**, a camping/accommodation/café/eatery operation owned by Atayal tribe members that offers a relaxing and very informative guided indigenous-experience eco-tour (fee) along a long riverside woodland trail. On the Kala Road descent you pass through **Kala**, a tiny Atayal village of about 20 households.

“Shansu De Guxiang” translates as “Bird’s Nest Fern Country.” Mountain-grown bird’s nest fern features strongly in Taiwan indigenous cuisine, and has become popular with the general population. It has a slightly bitter taste and a pleasant crisp crunch.

ECO EXPERIENCES

Learn about Lalashan’s rich ecology close to the visitor center or deep in the Kala River valley



Baling Historic Trail and Ecological Area



Your Chinese-speaking eco-guide will provide a steady stream of info-nuggets on Atayal life and the local flora and fauna. You'll also have the chance to test your archery skills, enjoy a rope-walking experience, have a short cooling soak in a waist-deep natural pool downstream from a loud pounding waterfall (if you've prepared the necessary attire), and stroll through both a natural bamboo grove and natural bird's nest fern "garden."

You'll also visit "Grandpa's Stone House," a "room" under a huge riverside boulder filled with the accouterments needed for long stays. It's said that about a hundred years back an old Kala hunter would stay hidden here for days waiting for large animals such as bear or deer to pass by, then share the meat with all Kala residents.

SHANSU DE GUXIANG (山蘇的故鄉)

☎ 0927-396-620

📍 No. 180-10, Neighborhood 11, Hualing Village, Fuxing District, Taoyuan City
(桃園市復興區華陵里11鄰180-10號)

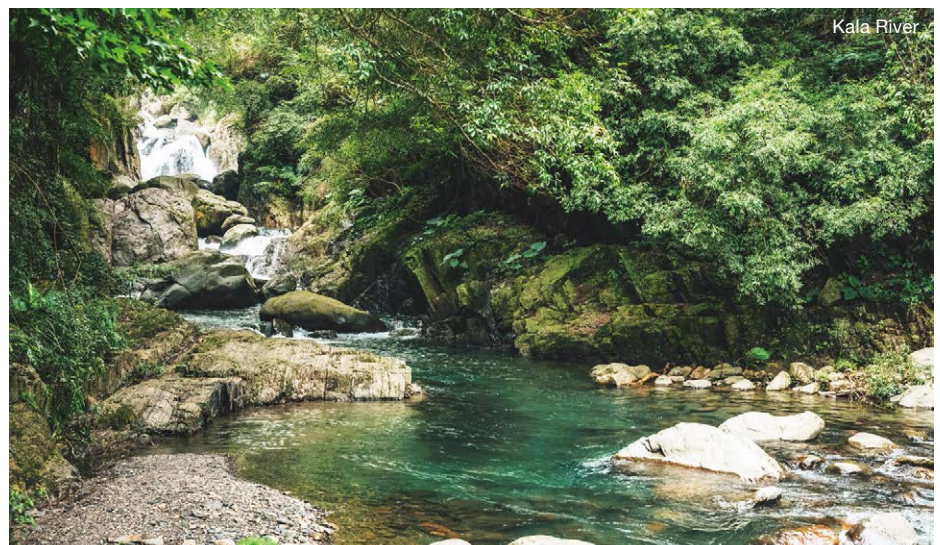
🌐 sunsu.okgo.tw (Chinese)



Baling Old Bridge



Bird's nest fern



Kala River



Divine Trees of Lalashan

You've heard the word *baling* used a number of times to this point. Time now to inform you that in the Atayal language this word means “giant trees” – and that is exactly where we are heading now, to Lalashan's most famous attraction, the 75ha **Lalashan (Daguanshan) Forest Reserve**, entered at the end of the Baling Road. Not far past Upper Baling the road dips down below the rising ridgeline on the mountain's north face, riding along the face all the way to the high upper limits of the Kala River valley. The reserve's giant “divine trees” are concentrated around the just-born Kala River as it slices along, ever-deepening the crook between Lalashan and its mountain neighbor on the north.

The paved road ends about 700m before the crook, morphing into a wide unpaved path that takes you to the giant trees. Before the trailhead is a nature center providing information on the reserve's trailways, biology, and geology.

Enter the trail and you enter a world apart, a magisterial “living museum” of nature's power and artistic ability. The reserve's trail network totals 3.7km, with a mix of smooth road-like sections, rough and narrower sections with exposed roots and rocks, boardwalks, and wood-staircase sections. In this magical ancient-cypress cluster are about 120 trees more than 500 years old, with 22 marked out for public viewing and explanatory signboards with good English provided. The grandpa of the tribe was a sapling 2,800 years ago. The tallest of the tribe soars 55m high.

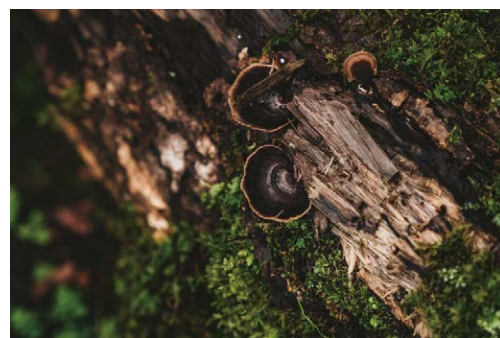
The trail from the nature center to the river – here best called a wide rushing stream (when rains are aplenty) – takes about 20 minutes. The trail network spreads out at the waterway, providing a number of loop options. There are also washroom facilities at this point. Many covered shelters and other rest stops at trailside are provided around the network.

The wooden boardwalk/step sections have been constructed for two reasons, to prevent erosion and to keep visitors from the tree bases. This is an area of peaty soil, the uppermost roots of the red cypress lie close or above the ground's surface, and too-close tourist access risks serious damage.

The Taiwan red cypress is a cousin to the giant cypress trees that only grow elsewhere on our planet on the North American Pacific Coast and in Japan. The finest-quality wood is provided by Taiwan's own, however, which is why the Taiwan government now actively protects local forest resources, in the past systematically over-exploited.

Many visitors find the giants that grow on the steepest inclines the most photogenic, because of their fantastical base shapes. These magnificent trees have anchored themselves by bizarrely distorting their trunks, up to 10 meters in total width, each outshoot trunk section just one or two meters thick.

All visitors wish to know which is the oldest of the sacred trees. The answer is no. 5, which has a naturally-formed hole at its base well demonstrating how giant trees deny nutrients to their innards yet remain perfectly viable.



MAGNIFICENT TREES

Lalashan is among the best forest areas in Taiwan to see ancient tree giants up close

LALASHAN FOOD OPTIONS

In addition to its divine trees and divine views, Lalashan is renowned for its fruit production, and especially for its delicious juicy **honey peaches**, **pears**, and **persimmons**. You'll see steep-slope orchards all over the mountainsides in the middle and upper reaches.

Many of the numerous guesthouse operators on the mountain have their own on-site fruit orchards, adding to the scenic splendor of your stay. You'll also find the fruits for sale roadside at a number of stands and shops along Baling Road. Demand for the honey peaches is especially intense; harvest-time for these is mid-July to mid-August.

The “**Lala Renjia Fine Food Restaurant**” is on Baling Road just 30 or so meters before it reaches the ridgeline in Upper Baling. This is one of Lalashan's most popular eateries, consistently rated as one of the top culinary choices in online voting.

The staff is country-warm friendly, and the views across the valley to the south do wonders for the appetite. The back valley-facing wall in the spacious dining area is an almost solid bank of glass, and an unobstructed sweeping panorama is available to even the furthest-away tables in the room's middle.

Whole free-range chicken roasted in a wood-fired oven is the house specialty. This is also served at a number of other local restaurants, and online voting declares Lala Renjia's to be among the best. It is seasoned with a south European-style mix of herbs and spices. The crispy outer layer wonderfully matches the succulent meat; the chicken is so tender that it pulls away using the hand (in plastic glove provided), no knife required. The chicken's rich drippings are used as the base for the savory accompanying sauce.

Among the other first-rate meat-centered choices is the trout prepared with lemongrass and lemon, the roasted pork slices served with scallion slivers atop and a sesame-seed sauce, and the *liang ban* with smoked-pork slivers. *Liang ban*, literally “cold mix,” is a general term for a salad-type dish featuring different item assortments, meat not always used. This particular dish also features slivers of cucumber, carrot, scallion, potato, and bamboo shoot.

Three vegetable dishes are also specially recommended. One is the mountain-vegetable platter, featuring oven-roasted mushroom, broccoli, and squash. The squash is delectable, softened so much



Lalashan honey peaches





"Lala Renjia Fine Food Restaurant"



“LALA RENJIA FINE FOOD RESTAURANT” (拉拉人嘉美食莊)

- ☎ 0967-153-876
- 📍 No. 60-1, Baling, Fuxing District, Taoyuan City
(桃園市復興區巴陵 60-1 號)
- 🌐 [facebook.com/lalafmailly](https://www.facebook.com/lalafmailly)

it has the texture of pudding. The steamed okra comes with a delish house-recipe sauce made with honey peaches. This sauce is also for sale, packaged gift-style in little glass jars. Fiddlehead greens, another now-generally-popular indigenous vegetable, is here served with smoked bonito flakes atop.

The other top contender for Lalashan's finest free-range roast chicken is **Guangming Farm**. This simple wooden-cottage-style eatery is on the upper reaches of the main road through Upper Baling not far from the forest reserve, looking into the Kala River valley. You can't miss it – the huge red-brick kiln-style oven is in the open-faced front area, right by the road, with a large pile of firewood beside it. The whole chickens here are seasoned with garlic and *magao*. *Magao* is a staple indigenous seasoning (in Chinese called *shan hujiao* or “mountain peppercorn”). It's peppery with hints of lemongrass and ginger.



Guangming Farm



FRESH FROM THE MOUNTAIN
Restaurants in Upper Baling are known for their delicious dishes made with local produce

GUANGMING FARM (光明農場)

- ☎ 0913-566-218
- 📍 No. 192-8, Shenmu Rd., Fuxing District, Taoyuan City
(桃園市復興區神木路 192 之 8 號)
- 🌐 [facebook.com/a033912555](https://www.facebook.com/a033912555)



GUESTHOUSES WITH A VIEW

As one might expect, the guesthouses on Lalashan supply superlative views and deep quiet. And also as one might expect, they are concentrated in the middle and upper areas. The greatest concentration is along the ridgeline past and above Shang Baling, reached via Zhongxin Road – appropriately, “Central Heart” road – which heads upward right on the ridgeline. The road starts in Shang Baling.

Yun Xiang Zhan (“Cloud Enjoyment Inn”) is found at the end of a steep driveway off Zhongxin Road, on the mountain’s south face. This is a chalet-style two-story guesthouse set amidst fruit trees and a long line of tall wind-protection coniferous trees on the down-slope side.

Your stay will be the ultimate getaway from city distractions. The wood-theme guestrooms, central shared living room, and large roof-covered, slope-overhanging decked patio are the ultimate in simplicity. Nevertheless, giving way to modern demands, large wall-mounted TVs are provided in the guestrooms and WiFi is available on the patio. The latter ensures that the patio is busy mornings and evenings with guests dividing time between electronic-gadget fascination and big-vista appreciation. The friendly host gives his guests mountain-cultivated Oolong tea leaf to brew using the patio’s set of tea equipment.

Yun Xiang Zhan does not provide food service. However, there is a tiny kitchen just off the decked patio with a refrigerator, gas stove, steamer, and wok.

Yun Xiang Zhan guesthouse



YUN XIANG ZHAN / TAOSHAN (雲享棧 / 桃山)

☎ (03) 391-2045

📍 No. 156-5, Baling, Neighborhood 14, Hualing Village, Fuxing District, Taoyuan City
(桃園市復興區華陵里 14 鄰巴陵 156-5 號)

🌐 ysz.ego.tw (Chinese)

NO. 36 FARM (36 號農場)

☎ (03) 391-2585

📍 No. 36, Neighborhood 8, Hualing Village, Fuxing District, Taoyuan City (桃園市復興區華陵里8鄰36號)

🌐 36farm.okgo.tw (Chinese)



No. 36 Farm

A special thing to look for: Directly below the patio you'll see the monorail track the guesthouse-owner uses to work his steep farm plots. These are a common sight in Taiwan's high-mountain farm areas.

Another item to note: Immediately upslope from Yun Xiang Zhan you'll see cottage-style facilities. These are called **Taoshan** ("Peach Mountain"), and have the same type of set-up as Yun Xiang Zhan. Taoshan is in fact part of the Yun Xiang Zhan operation; the different name arose simply for business-registration reasons.

No. 36 Farm, run by an amicable young couple, is located right on the Baling Road in Zhong Baling. It has three buildings with accommodations. The main building has modern exposed-concrete styling. The single second-floor room, which faces southeast, is accessed in the rear via a long balcony. On the first floor is a hip restaurant/café/bar.

One of the other buildings is right next door. This has a cottage-style wood theme. There are two rooms, with a shared living room between making this perfect for families. The third facility, which faces southwest, is located 100 meters downhill just off Baling Road. Hidden downslope in trees are two handsome side-by-side wood-built cabins. Note that the second and third accommodation structures are Japanese-style, with mattresses right on the floor.

Goodian Coffee, Bed & Breakfast is located beside the Baling Road not far below Zhong Baling. It faces south, low enough that the rushing waters of the Dahan River tributary below provide constant aural soothing. This is a large operation, with an expansive slope-overhang observation deck, fruit orchard, fish pond, cherry-blossom trail, etc. On the food menu, which is focused on Chinese dishes, are free-range chicken and organic vegetables cultivated on-site. The pride of the beverage menu is coffees made using beans specialty-baked in Italy as well as elite coffee-brewing equipment from Italy.



Goodian Coffee, Bed & Breakfast



Photos courtesy of Goodian

GOODIAN COFFEE, BED & BREAKFAST (谷點咖啡民宿)

☎ (03) 391-2415

📍 No. 30, Neighborhood 8, Hualing Village, Fuxing District, Taoyuan City (桃園市復興區華陵里巴陵8鄰30號)

🌐 www.goodian.com.tw (Chinese)

ON THE WAY/IN THE AR

In our accompanying article on Taoyuan's Daxi and Longtan districts a number of Highway 7 tourist spots closer to its Daxi town starting-point were presented. Below we introduce two other popular tourist attractions east of these further along the highway, located close to each other, where the big mountains of the island's center loom into view.

Heading east, first encountered is the landscaped, tall-tree-shaded **Jiaobanshan Park** (free entry), a quick drive off the highway along County Route 117. It sits on a high plateau looking deep down at the Dahan River. Far across the valley, up on the mountainside opposite at eye level, is an Atayal settlement. Far to the right (west), the writhingly serpentine Dahan is seen flowing into the tail end of the mighty Shimen Reservoir (see our accompanying article on page 38).

The park's central attraction is a villa once owned by President Chiang Kai-shek, now a museum filled with photos of events past. Like Cihu along Highway 7, visited in the just-mentioned Daxi/Longtan article, this presidential retreat also did double-duty as a designated government retreat should Communist China attack – first Cihu, then Jiaobanshan if needed, moving up the Dahan.

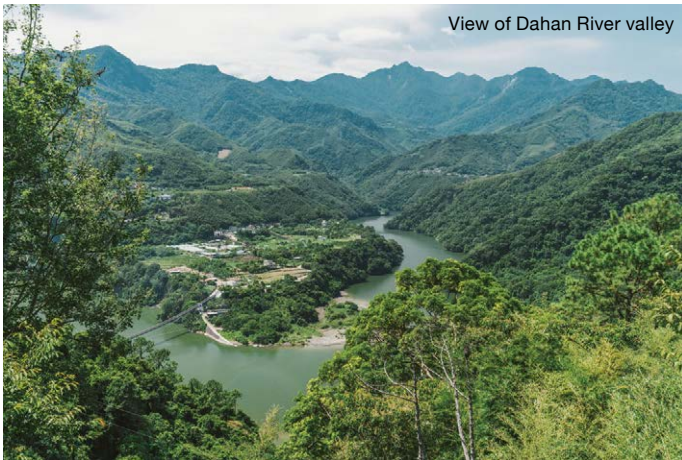
Tour the underground command-post bunker complex inside the plateau, and take the well-maintained evacuation trail down to the new, elegant 303m river-crossing suspension footbridge. (Chiang was also to be secretly whisked downriver if Highway 7 was cut off; a speedboat commando team was always at the ready).

Other buildings on the plateau house displays on the region's logging and camphor-production days. Before the early 1900s when synthetic-camphor production began, Taiwan was a leading camphor producer. Beyond trading, first contact between Han Chinese and island mountain tribes often came with Han camphor-extraction incursions.

Chiang Kai-shek museum



View of Dahan River valley



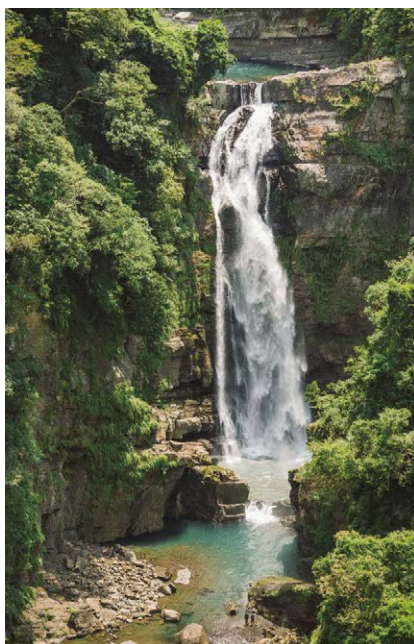
SCENERY & HISTORY

Among the tourist attractions along the western part of the Northern Cross-Island Highway are Jiaobanshan Park and the Little Wulai Scenic Area



Jiaobanshan Park

EA



The waterfall seen from a distance



Little Wulai Skywalk

The **Little Wulai Scenic Area** is a short drive off the highway along County Route 115. The turnoff is not far before the Atayal village of Luofu, mentioned in the introduction. It should here be mentioned that a number of other Atayal villages will also be passed on the way to Lalashan – a few right through the middle. Look for the telltale church steeple in each.

The celebrities of the scenic area are a picturesque rugged gorge along a Dahan tributary, and the high, thundering waterfall that exclaims the gorge's end. From the parking lot (vehicle entry fee), a gorge-side walkway takes you a few hundred meters to the glass-floor **Little Wulai Skywalk** (entry fee; closed noon-1pm). The skywalk dramatically shoots out right over the 50m-high falls. This is a hanging-valley waterfall; the cliffs directly below you are above-ground evidence of an active fault line.

Thrilling falls-bottom views also await those who are willing to sweat a workout. The trailhead to the steep 750m Fall Base walk, clearly signposted in English, starts at an observation deck right beside County Route 115 about a half-kilometer before the parking lot.

Why "little" Wulai? The word *wulai* means "hot springs" in Atayal. Not far northeast, at least as far as the crow flies,

is the tourist-popular Wulai village and hot-springs resort in New Taipei City, home to abundant spring waters and an even more spectacular 80m waterfall. **T**



The waterfall seen from above

ENGLISH AND CHINESE

Atayal 泰雅
 Baling Historic Trail and Ecological Area 巴陵古道 & 生態園區
 Baling Old Bridge 巴陵舊橋
 Baling Road 巴陵道路
 "divine trees" 神木
 Fall Base 瀑布底
 "Grandpa's Stone House" 阿公的石屋
 Jiaobanshan Park 角板山公園
 Kala 卡拉
 Kala River 卡拉溪
 Kala Road 卡拉道路
 Lalashan 拉拉山
 Lalashan (Daguanshan) Forest Reserve 拉拉山 [達觀山] 自然保護區
liang ban 涼拌
 Little Wulai Scenic Area 小烏來風景區
 Little Wulai Skywalk 小烏來天空步道
 Luofu 羅浮
magao 馬告
shan hujiao 山胡椒
 Shang Baling 上巴陵
 Zhong Baling 中巴陵
 Zhongxin Road 中心路

PRACTICAL INFO

For further information on Lalashan and the other sightseeing spots introduced here, plus info on accommodations, bus service, etc., visit taiwan.net.tw (Taiwan Tourism Bureau) and travel.tycg.gov.tw (Taoyuan City).

As well, check out the Taiwan Tourist Shuttle hop-on/hop-off bus service website (taiwantrip.com.tw). One of its routes gets you to Jiaobanshan and Little Wulai. Its route network covers the whole island, so check out the site for the destinations covered in our other articles as well.





FUN DAY TRIPPING IN DAXI and LONGTAN

*On the Taoyuan Plateau, in the
Dahan River Valley, among the
Taoyuan Low Mountains*

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE

PHOTOS | CHEN CHENG-KUO, RAY CHANG

How does this sound? A cool walk through a long pedestrian-only mountain tunnel. A long town-center walkabout around a “dragon-inhabited” lake. A saunter along an isolated high-hills lake where President Chiang Kai-shek once had a getaway retreat. Meanderings in a serene riverside eco park and heritage-village Old Street. Plus mountain-view café, restaurant, and food truck R&R pit-stop. Custom-tailor these options for the most enjoyable of day trips.

This article is designed for use in two different ways, depending on your travel needs. We’re introducing a number of appealing destinations in the mid-, mostly rural section of Taoyuan City, in adjoining Longtan and Daxi districts, which have at their heart two large, district-eponymous towns.

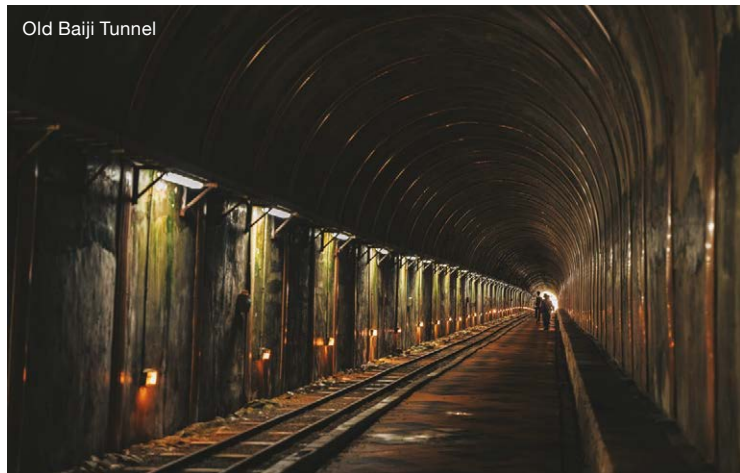
Most of Longtan sits on the Taoyuan Plateau, the plain that spreads inland from the Taiwan Strait. Most of Daxi is in the hill country that quickly gives way to Taoyuan’s mountainous south. Any combination of destinations is perfect for a stand-alone day trip – attempting them all would be herculean – and perfect as well for your first or last day of a multi-day trip to Lalashan in Taoyuan’s deep south, introduced in our main article (see page 10). Note that we also spend time exploring Daxi’s Shimen Reservoir in our Cycling in Taiwan article (see page 38).

Cihu

Cihu, the biggest attraction on this article's itinerary, is in Daxi Township beside Provincial Highway 7, the route to Lalashan. Its location is right where Daxi's hills meet the first set of low mountains headed inland. It's on the north side of the highway. What is called Front Cihu is where a stream exits from a narrow gap between two mountains. Back Cihu is the area encompassing the small, serene lake in that gap.

The main **Front Cihu** attraction is an official residence that ROC President Chiang Kai-shek had built, resembling the traditional residences in his China mainland home area, which was converted to become his mausoleum after his 1975 passing. The other is a hillside park filled with more than 200 statues of Chiang Kai-shek (and 27 of Dr. Sun Yat-sen) relocated here from around Taiwan in the early 2000s during a period of political dispute.

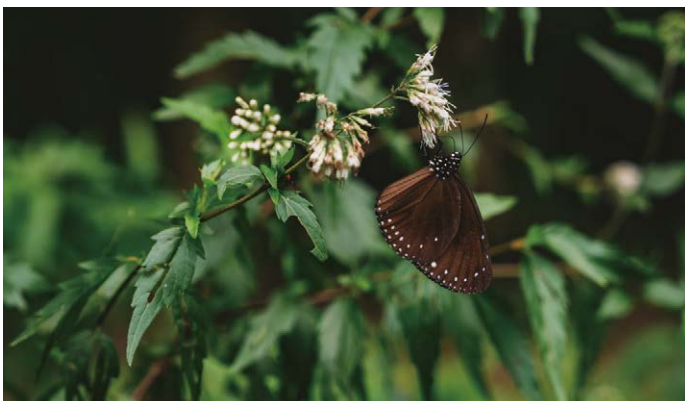
A long, pleasant hilly pathway takes you to **Back Cihu**. Vestiges from Taiwan's martial-law era (this was to be a retreat if Communist China attacked) include bunkers, checkpoint gates, and five former command offices/official residences on the densely forested hillside overlooking the lake. These five structures now do duty as a café and galleries on the Chiang family's history, the local ecology, etc.



Old Baiji Tunnel



Back Cihu



A bit up the highway from Cihu, a Highway 7 tunnel pierces the first low-mountain line. Right beside and parallel, on the south side, is the **Old Baiji Tunnel**, today part of a recreational trail. It was created by the Japanese in 1944 (Japan controlled Taiwan from 1895-1945) for use as a footpath and narrow-gauge pushcar-railway route. Relics and mock-ups are a walk-through bonus.

Directly across the highway from the tunnel-entry area is the **Baiji Shaded Trail** trailhead. This was the original route over the mountain before the Old Baiji Tunnel opened. About 3km long, traversing dense forest, its first length is gentle-graded and leads to a Back Cihu back entrance (no general entry), where there are toilet facilities. Note that the narrow route is paved, and vehicle entry/parking is allowed on this first section. The trees along the way, and panoramas in the higher sections, are a treat.

Note: All visitors to Back Cihu need to register in advance online at backcihu.tycg.gov.tw (Chinese).

Good Food and Coffee

The first time I (unexpectedly) spotted the **GO GO BOX**, being a well-trained North American, I had a Pavlovian reaction and immediately began salivating.

Explanation:

The GO GO BOX is a big and vivaciously painted food truck standing in a grassy park-like field right beside Highway 7 a short drive beyond (east of) the attractions mentioned above. I was instantly reminded of countless stop-offs at cute highway-side food joints while on long highway drives back in North America, and the delicious tastes and super-relaxed outdoor nature-surrounded eating that no doubt awaited.

The truck, a retro work of art – a converted camper bus – sits in what is called the LA ONE BASE. “LA ONE” is a humorous rendering of the *le wan* or “happy play” in the Chinese name. It looks right up a mountainside covered with dense jungle-like forest, and all the while you’ll be entertained by birds, cicadas, and other good living things.

The food truck’s “friends” in the base include a bright-red vintage firetruck, picnic tables and other shade-protected alfresco seating, and two adorable food stands dressed up as food trucks, the MINI BOX (fries, onion rings, chicken wings, beer...) and Sweetie (fruit tarts, breads, cakes...).

So – at last, you’re thinking – what exactly is it that will be stimulating your GO GO BOX salivations. Your shared-with-friends snack-o-rama must include the tenderloin burger with Tillamook cheese, burrito with carne asada, pork arepa, superb crispy-skin fries, popcorn sea-salt ice-cream smoothie, and orange/lemon/passionfruit fruit drink.

Beyond your own tastebuds, your proof of the food-goodness here will be the constant stream of motorcyclist and cyclist groups rolling in.

The **Busu Two Café** is set amidst a grove of tall coniferous and deciduous trees beside a country road between Longtan town and the Sankeng Eco Park (see below). The original Busu Café is in Daxi town.

The inviting entrance area, inside and outside, has a bright-white theme and is made up to look like a cozy Western-style country cottage. Further inside, the space opens up markedly and the word “cavernous” comes to mind. The building was originally a storage facility, and the ceiling is quite high. Tables are spaced out wide, giving you liberal personal space. Very large windows allow warming natural light to stream in, with tall drapes used when the sunlight is too direct.

The café, which has a cartoon image of a husky gripping a large coffee cup in its mouth as its logo, and has various animal figures inside – is happily dog and kid friendly. Doggies and kids can run around the spacious grounds, and kids can expend further energies in a large outdoor play area.

From the menu, special recommendations go to the

crispy-exterior waffles, served with a very sweet whipped cream, salt-flavor rose latte, featuring foam with a strong sea salt-and-rose taste, and green tea ice with milk, the fresh milk poured over green bone-shaped ice “cubes.”

The wife of this writer, a Taiwanese lady who has lived three different periods in North America, considers the **Tina Kitchen** tourist operation in Daxi Township a little bit of Taiwan paradise. Ladies, especially, love this place. It’s a large organic farm and tourist-leisure operation in the wide Dahan River valley, looking directly across the river at historic Daxi town atop the bluffs on the other side, mountains beyond. The complex reminds her of long windows-down, easy-driving North America road trips with stops at countryside farms, old country stores, farm-based herb-and-flower shops, and country-view & country-cookin’ restaurants. Here’s why.

The operation has two main buildings, in an L-shape with a gap in between. In one, which looks like a long converted stable, is a very large café and a flower-and-craft garden shop stuffed to the rafters with the lovely things the female shopper loves to linger forever over. In the other is a patisserie (goodies made on-site in view), a country-store-style shop brimming with jams, preserves, baked goods (again done on-site), and an airy, relaxed restaurant with “Home Sweet Home” prominently posted. Both restaurant and café have pretty-as-a-picture views over the large Tina farm fields out back. Visitors are welcome to stroll the fields and the landscaped grounds in between.

Afternoon tea is served in both restaurant and café, with the breads and cakes changed daily. Specially recommended dishes in the Western/Chinese restaurant are the pork knuckle with Dijon mustard and sauerkraut, steamed fish with lemongrass and lemon, seafood casserole (squid, scallop, shrimp) with Edam cheese, and iced Sri Lankan black tea with osmanthus, kumquat, and other fruits.

1 GO GO BOX IN LA ONE BASE (GO GO BOX 餐車誌 IN 樂灣基地)

- 📍 No. 138, Sec. 2, Fuxing Rd., Daxi District, Taoyuan City (桃園市大溪區復興路二段 138 號)
- 📱 [facebook.com/gogobox.foodtruck](https://www.facebook.com/gogobox.foodtruck)

2 BUSU TWO CAFÉ (丑咖啡二店)

- 📍 No. 352, Jia'an Section, Zhongzheng Rd., Longtan District, Taoyuan City (桃園市龍潭區中正路佳安段 352 號)
- 📱 [facebook.com/busutwo.cafe](https://www.facebook.com/busutwo.cafe)

3 TINA KITCHEN (DAXI BRANCH) (TINA 廚房 - 大溪店)

- 📍 No. 55, Ln 175, Sec. 1, Rui'an Rd., Daxi District, Taoyuan City (桃園市大溪區瑞安路一段 175 巷 55 號)
- 📱 [facebook.com/organicyam](https://www.facebook.com/organicyam)



1



1



2



2



3



3

Longtan Lake

Longtan town, on the Taoyuan Plateau's higher south edge, is another of the northwest region's Hakka settlements surrounded by good farmland (see our accompanying article on Zhudong/Beipu/Nanpu, page 28). This is a busy place – an elevated stretch of the six-lane National Freeway 3 races right through its south area.

Though not at its physical center, its cultural/spiritual center is the large “dragon pool” – i.e., *longtan* – on its west-side edge, farmland beyond. This lake dates back to imperial times, an unusually large version, 18ha, of the countless irrigation ponds created by Han Chinese pioneers that dotted the Taoyuan Plateau (many today still extant), leading to the nickname “Land of a Thousand Ponds.” Legend asserted that an auspicious yellow dragon dwelled at its bottom, the reason there was always ample water supply, even in dry weather. On your visit, try to spot it moving about in the murky depths.

The lake is today a well-developed tourist attraction, Longtan's most popular. It's surrounded by a pleasant pathway, with lots of shade and seating. The west-side grounds, farmland in view behind, have been developed as a long, thin landscaped park. This being a most auspicious place, it makes sense that a large, ornate Chinese temple was erected atop a small lake island, reached by a short vehicle/pedestrian bridge. Two scenic pedestrian-only bridges also reach out across the water to the island, the older one zigzagging wildly just above the water (in Chinese belief, ghosts and demons can't zigzag), the younger and much larger bridge soaring majestically high above it.

The magnetic **Long Café** (“long” as in “dragon”) is on the second level of a stylish modern-architecture

leisure and recreation complex in the lake's northwest corner. Among its pleasures are great coffees, teas, cakes and pastries, and hot dishes, but its greatest pleasure is one of Taiwan's best café views – through its front floor-to-high-ceiling glass wall – lake and temple filling up the foreground, glorious central mountains the faraway backdrop.



Long Café



Longtan Lake



Sankeng Eco Park

Sankeng Eco Park

The blissfully peaceful 3.8ha Sankeng Eco Park is located on the left (west) side of the Dahan River immediately downstream from the imposing Shimen Dam and its After Bay Weir. It sits on the river-valley bottom behind this area's long, high riverside flood-prevention embankment.

This site was reclaimed for eco-leisure use in a joint government/community effort. The sleepy centuries-old village of Sankeng – wide awake and busy with tourists on weekends/holidays – is up above on the rolling hillside leading up to the Taoyuan Plateau. Once a place subject to illegal sand and gravel extraction, this is now a tranquil oasis with a serene lake, viewing pavilions, arch bridges, short canals, gurgling source streams, and large installation artworks made with natural materials.

It may be hard to imagine today, but in imperial times when the Dahan flowed much higher this was the site of a thriving riverport, and Sankeng was a key regional commercial center. It was also the highest riverport on the Dahan, which (heading upriver) turns abruptly inland at the dam site to enter the high hills and mountains. Sankeng is a Hakka

DAY TRIP COUNTRY

Taoyuan is perfect for short trips from Taipei, with a wide range of interesting spots to discover



village, and the village/port was this region's transport hub for such Hakka specialties as rice, tea, and camphor, most destined for Taiwan-outbound transport via the coastal port of Tamsui above Taipei. Tea, especially, was transported by porter from as far away as today's Miaoli County. The park-facing embankment wall, in full view through the trees, is adorned with a series of large bright-hue paintings depicting old-time Hakka farm life.

Be sure to take the time to visit narrow **Sankeng Old Street**, just a couple of hundred meters long, lined with vintage red-brick residences and commercial buildings. There are Hakka-specialty shops and eateries here – take home some Hakka mochi with brown sugar and ginger, or perhaps some kumquat sauce. **📍**

PRACTICAL INFO

This article's destinations are spread out, so self-driving is recommended. If doing so, the drive from Taipei on National Freeway 3 can be quick, about 30 minutes to the Daxi Interchange, 40 to the Longtan Interchange.

Regular bus service is also available to all mentioned spots. For bus-info assistance plus more info on the area's sightseeing attractions, accommodations, etc., visit taiwan.net.tw and travel.tycg.gov.tw.

🇬🇧 ENGLISH AND CHINESE

Back Cihu 後慈湖
 Baiji Shaded Trail 百吉林蔭步道
 Cihu 慈湖
 Dahan River 大漢溪
 Daxi 大溪
 Front Cihu 前慈湖
 "Land of a Thousand Ponds" 千塘之鄉
 Lalashan 拉拉山
 Long Café 龍咖啡
 Longtan 龍潭
 Longtan Lake 龍潭大池
 Old Baiji Tunnel 舊百吉隧道
 Sankeng Eco Park 三坑自然生態公園
 Sankeng Old Street 三坑老街





Alley in Beipu town

A Hakka Country Living Museum

Three Hill-Country Hakka Neighbors: Zhudong, Beipu, and Nanpu

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE

PHOTOS | CHEN CHENG-KUO, VISION

The hill country of northwest Taiwan is Hakka country. The Hakka are a Han Chinese minority people with a distinctive culture, deep-rooted traditions, and especially close-knit communities. These are often farming communities, and in this article you'll be visiting three old, thriving Hakka settlements in hilly Hsinchu County – two towns and one village – that are close to each other and form a true living museum.

The term “Hakka” means “guest people.” Throughout the history of the China mainland and then Taiwan (up to the 20th century), the story of the Hakka has been forced large-scale migration and forced movement from better agricultural lands onto more marginal lands, often in the hills. Before making the leap to Taiwan in large numbers starting in the 1600s, Hakka had settled in concentration in China’s southeast Guangdong province and to a lesser degree in adjoining Fujian province, both ruggedly hilly/mountainous.

In this article we’re visiting three places located close to each other in Hsinchu County, in the rolling-hill region southeast of fast-expanding Hsinchu City, which sits on the coast. Each developed as a market and supply center for the Hakka farmers pulling wealth from the region’s rich farmland, well-supplied with nutritious waters from the mountains in clear view to the east.

Each has its own distinctive charms. As with other Hakka towns and villages around the island, coordinated efforts have been made by locals, in official positions and in a private capacity, to beautify their districts to attract tourists. You’ll see by the numbers of tourists meandering the old commercial streets, especially on weekends/holidays, that these endeavors have met with great success.

01

Zhudong

Far the largest and busiest of our destinations today, Zhudong sits beside the same river that flows past Hsinchu City out to the sea. Just upriver, the broad, fertile valley narrows dramatically and you instantly find yourself in gorge-and-mountain country. “Zhudong” means “east of Hsinchu”; the *zhu* and *chu* in the names is the same character, meaning “bamboo,” reference to the thick thorny-bamboo walls that once surrounded the city.

This town’s heart is **Zhudong Market**, Taiwan’s largest traditional Hakka market, centered on Donglin Road. With a history of over 60 years (during which older, smaller markets were gradually eliminated), it has about 500 sellers and offers a cornucopia of Hakka-specific agri-products and prepared foods. The rest of this article could be filled up naming these, but here are two to specially look for: the unique Hakka preserved vegetables called *fucai* and a delicious savory dish featuring broad, flat, chewy rice noodles called *bantiao*.

Incongruously, standing conspicuously among all the colorful vendors and hubbub is a large church, on Donglin Road. You can’t miss the **Zhudong Catholic Church** – on the façade at one end is a large artwork rendering of a dove of peace, on the other a two-story-high depiction of Christ the Savior with arms raised high. The modified Gothic-style facility, built in 1954 by a Spanish Jesuit priest, was the first large church built in the Hsinchu region after the Nationalist government (and many missionaries) evacuated to Taiwan in the 1940s.

Mitaimu is another Hakka rice-noodle specialty – short noodles, thicker than spaghetti, which have a wonderfully pliant mouthfeel. A few blocks from the market is one of Zhudong’s most popular sellers, **Meilan A-yi**, a cute and cozy eatery with a shopfront adorned with atmospheric farmhouse-style touches such as squat wooden stools, a low wooden bench, and a burlap sack. In summer, *mitaimu* ice is especially popular – a dish of ice, rice noodles, small tapioca balls, mung beans, jelly, and a sweet syrup. A beverage version is also served. In winter, it’s hot stir-fried *mitaimu*, served with minced pork, chopped spring onion, bean sprout, and a broth that at Meilan A-yi is especially rich, deep, and flavorful, verging on gravy.

MEILAN A-YI (美蘭阿姨)

☎ 0936-080-704

📍 No. 59, Sanmin Street, Zhudong Township, Hsinchu County (新竹縣竹東鎮三民街59號)

🌐 [facebook.com/mmmmei595959](https://www.facebook.com/mmmmei595959)



Zhudong Catholic Church



Meilan A-yi



A TASTE OF HAKKA
The towns of Zhudong and Beipu in Hsinchu County are perfect for sampling specialties the Hakka people are well known for

02 Beipu

The town of Beipu is a short drive southwest of Zhudong. Provincial Highway 3 runs through Zhudong, and runs along the west side of Beipu. This old, winding, very scenic route runs primarily through Taiwan's west-side hill country all the way to the deep south.

“Beipu” literally means “north flat land.” The word *pu* means “open flat land/plain,” usually beside a body of water and developed by settlers. The town sits on a low plateau, with the village of Nanpu or “south flat land” on a low plateau immediately south. Beipu possesses a large number of official national heritage sites and old family-run shops, teahouses, eateries, and other enterprises, especially “on” **Beipu Old Street** – the term in fact refers to the old commercial district.

The town and surrounding area are known for a number of agri-products, most notably tea, rice/rice noodles, and dried persimmons. Visit the two-story **Guangfu Teahouse**, a big and wonderfully rambling old wood-and-red-brick place stuffed with antique and retro treasures that has teas, sweet treats, and hot foods (numerous Hakka-cuisine dishes). The *guang* and *fu* in the name refer to the aforementioned ancestral areas of Hakka and Holo Taiwanese pioneers, Guangfu and Fujian provinces.

Another special and very popular Guangfu Teahouse offering is a *leicha* experience, also offered at a number of other Beipu locations, in which you grind your own Hakka *leicha* or “thunder tea” with a traditional mortar and pestle. The “thunder” refers to the booming sounds the grinding makes. This is not the tea you are used to – de rigeuer ingredients include dried tea leaves and roasted peanuts, sesame seeds, and pumpkin seeds. The end result is very filling, and a great example of the emphasis on hearty nutrition in traditional Hakka fare because of the need for replenishment after heavy manual labor.

Lord Jiang's Persimmon Cake is one of Beipu's most charming shops. Beipu's winds are perfect for natural drying, and the townsfolk craft sweet, lightly goeey, pleasantly chewy dried persimmon in splendid variety. Lord Jiang's is enthusiastically liberal in providing samples, and sells attractively packaged gift sets.

Beipu's Old Street area



THUNDER TEA
Preparing Hakka-style *leicha* is a popular and fun way to learn about local cuisine and culture



Dried persimmons

GUANGFU TEAHOUSE (廣福茶坊)

☎ (03) 580-4543

📍 No. 10, Neighborhood 2, Beipu Village, Beipu Township, Hsinchu County (新竹縣北埔鄉北埔村二鄰 10 號)

LORD JIANG'S PERSIMMON CAKE (姜太公柿餅)

☎ 0954-079-958

📍 No. 24 Miaoqian St., Beipu Township, Hsinchu County (新竹縣北埔鄉廟前街 24 號)

🌐 facebook.com/lordjiangspersimmoncake.tw



Indigo dyeing in the Nanpu Community



HuKu PuKu café

03 Nanpu

Provincial Highway 3 curves around Nanpu, to its west. Beipu and Nanpu are within close, unobstructed sight of each other, separated by a depression with a stream and irrigation channels running through it. Every inch of this depression has been developed, covered with neatly sculpted rice paddies, fruit orchards, and vegetable plots, providing gorgeous photos with Van Gogh-like colors whenever the varied crops collectively approach harvest time. The effect is heightened by a bright-red steel-girder bridge (Nanpu Bridge) spanning the stream on the narrow road connecting the settlements.

Nanpu is officially a village, but its residences are quite spread out. Locals use the term Nanpu Community. You'll find numerous traditional-architecture residences here, as well as such other country delights as a heritage wooden water wheel (dating to 1845) and wooden clothes-washing pavilions on the irrigation channels.

Jinxiu Hall is a century-old Hakka courtyard-style residence that today serves as an exhibition hall filled with homestead and agricultural implements teaching visitors about the traditional way of life in a farming village.



Old wooden water wheel

The homey **HuKu PuKu café**, run by a young local lady, is in a small cabin with a gurgling irrigation channel and wooden water wheel on one side and a landscaped, frog-busy irrigation pond on the other. On the menu are teas, coffees, smoothies, and other beverages, as well as eco-friendly Western-style foods such as homemade brownies, cookies, and cakes. From the café you can enjoy a great view into the aforementioned farm-field-carpeted depression.

The **BK Fun Bakery** is about as rustic as you can get. It's in a well-aged red-brick farmhouse almost hidden away in trees, farm-use paraphernalia all around its entrance area. A large stack of firewood lines the shady entrance path, used inside in the large Roman (also called "black") oven hand-built by the owners. The aromas inside are heavenly. The specialty is eco-friendly dense European-style breads; specially recommended are those featuring Taiwan-theme ingredients, such as longan and pineapple. 🍷



BK Fun Bakery



HUKU PUKU (樂田園)
 ☎ 0988-986-862
 📍 No. 1-7, Neighborhood 1, Nanpu Village, Beipu Township, Hsinchu County (新竹縣北埔鄉南埔村1鄰1-7號)

BK FUN BAKERY (BK 坊窯烤麵包)
 ☎ 0932-133-564
 📍 No. 30, Neighborhood 3, Nanpu Village, Beipu Township, Hsinchu County (新竹縣北埔鄉南埔村3鄰30號)
 🌐 www.bkfun.com.tw (Chinese)

🗺 **ENGLISH AND CHINESE**
bantiao 板條
 Beipu 北埔
 Beipu Old Street 北埔老街
 Donglin Road 東林路
fucai 福菜
 Jinxiu Hall 金繡堂
leicha 擂茶
mitaimu 米苔目
 Miaoqian St. 廟前街
 Nanpu (Community) 南埔 (社區)
 Zhudong 竹東
 Zhudong Catholic Church 竹東天主堂
 Zhudong Market 竹東市場





TEXT | RICK CHARETTE

PHOTOS | COURTESY OF RESTAURANTS

Three Michelin-Starred Culinary Stars

“Delicious food’ has always been one of the main attractions for international tourists coming to Taiwan. Taiwan’s rich and diverse local ingredients and cooking skills have shaped our colorful food culture. The different venues, from night markets and simple shops to the finest restaurants, offer exquisite meals with diverse flavors and unforgettable gourmet life experiences.”

Wang Kwo-tsai, Minister, Ministry of Transportation and Communications
(at Michelin Guide Taipei & Taichung 2021 Star Revelation)

Michelin’s famed Red Guide, listing the best places to dine in a systematically reviewed locality, is the recognized culinary bible for globe-trekking foodies. Taiwan’s gastronomic prowess, and its rightful place on the global culinary stage, was recognized with the unveiling of the Michelin Guide Taipei in 2018. Taipei was the eighth Asian city/region to be honored with a dedicated Red Guide, following Tokyo, Hong Kong & Macau, Osaka & Kyoto, Singapore, Shanghai, Seoul, and Bangkok.

Recognizing the clear gastronomic differentiation in Taiwan’s various regions, Michelin began reviewing eateries in the central city of Taichung in 2020, and the island’s Red Guide is now titled the MICHELIN Guide Taipei & Taichung. Michelin now also recognizes the

importance of night markets and street foods in Asia, providing special recommendations in these categories for Taipei/Taichung, and with the 2021 edition has a new category, the Michelin Green Star, for restaurants that “embody and embrace sustainability in their day-to-day operations.”

Le Palais, bestowed with the coveted Michelin three-star judgment, is the country’s highest-rated restaurant. Travel in Taiwan now takes you on a Taipei gastronomic mini-tour – three dining dates. You’ll be sitting down at the three-star Le Palais, the two-star The Guest House, and the one-star Mountain & Sea House.

Bon appetit!



ONE-STAR
RESTAURANT

Mountain & Sea House

Mountain & Sea House, which serves Taiwanese cuisine, was one of two inaugural Michelin Green Star recipients for the 2021 edition. It is located in Zhongzheng District. The nearest Taipei Metro stop is MRT Zhongxiao Xinsheng Station.

High quality cooking, worth a stop!

“Complete with a courtyard and a high-ceilinged foyer, this luxurious mansion evokes the glamorous days of the 1930s in both its décor and its food. The must-try roast suckling pig uses only 21-day-old hogs, slow-cooked for 12 hours and roasted until crisp and golden. Another speciality, deboned chicken braised in pork tripe, takes six hours to prepare. Both the pig and chicken need pre-ordering. Fried rice with mullet roe is also unmissable.”

Michelin Guide’s Point of View

This restaurant’s stunning façade, in a recessed street-level section of an otherwise gleaming-white modern high-rise building, is a gorgeous mock-up of an old-time local rich man’s manor.

In the eyes of many, “Taiwanese cuisine” is equated with the wide world of eats in the lively local night market and street food scene. Mountain & Sea House is reviving the fare of the haute cuisine banquet-style Taiwanese restaurants that thrived from the early 20th century until fading away in the ’60s and ’70s, conducting meticulous recipe research and recreating “traditional dishes with a contemporary flair.”



First Grade Treasure Pot



Suckling Pig



Premium Mud Crab Seafood Rice Cake

Jin Jumbo Box Set Menu



A must-savor classic not mentioned above is the *Scallop and Winter Melon Stew*, a specialty of Penglai Pavilion, one of the leading-light Taiwanese haute cuisine restaurants of the earlier era, imparted to the Mountain & Sea team by a former Penglai chef.

"In Mountain and Sea House, "farm-to-table" is the restaurant's core concept. Its acumen revolves around the belief that heirloom local produce is the key to making delicious dishes. In addition to growing vegetables organically, the high-quality meat and seafood served are obtained only from farmers and fishermen who practice sustainable production methods."

Michelin article on "First Green Stars Awarded"



Crispy Roasted Chicken

MOUNTAIN & SEA HOUSE (山海樓)

☎ (02) 2351-3345

📍 No. 94, Sec. 2, Ren'ai Rd., Zhongzheng Dist., Taipei City (台北市中正區仁愛路二段 94 號)

🌐 www.mountain-n-seahouse.com

📍 <https://reurl.cc/Kr6WeR> (Michelin Guide)



TWO-STAR
RESTAURANT

The Guest House

The Guest House serves Huaiyang and Sichuanese cuisine, with selections from other regional Chinese cuisines. It is located in Zhongzheng District, inside the Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel. The nearest Taipei Metro stop is MRT Shandao Temple Station.

Excellent cuisine, worth a detour!

“Formerly a members-only dining club, it excites not with its décor, but with its food. Impressive skills transform seemingly simple dishes into tasteful presentations revealing great textures and taste. The menu is largely Huai Yang and Sichuan in origin, but with a Taiwanese twist. Signature dishes include double-boiled soups, chicken rice with sesame oil, pork tail braised in red yeast rice, and millefeuille tofu skin.”

Michelin Guide’s Point of View

Huaiyang and Sichuanese are two of what are called the Four Great Traditions of Chinese cuisine. The other two are Cantonese (see Le Palais entry below) and the cuisine of Shandong. These cover the “four directions” – following the order presented here, East, West, South, North.

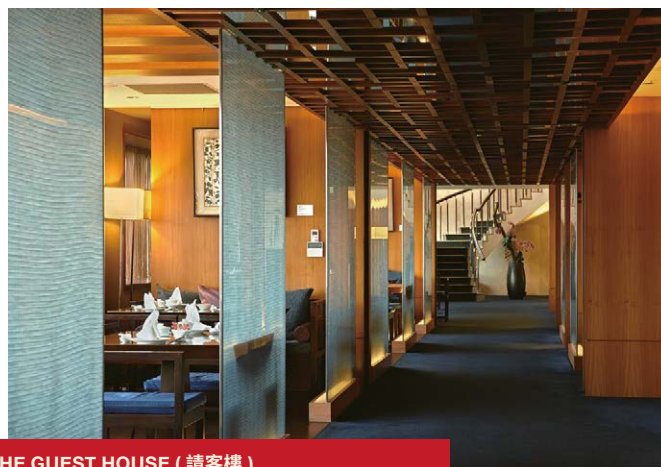
The Guest House is on the top floor of the hotel, providing good views over the city to the mountains beyond. The décor features wood-paneled walls and a mix of wood and carpeted flooring. Showcased prominently are black-and-white images of two scenic old places in China, Suzhou and Zhouzhuang, creating a scene of classic genteel waterside beauty. Both of these are in the Huaiyang-cuisine region.

The restaurant is renowned for its specialty handmade noodles and tofu items. The tofu skin creation mentioned above, formally called the *Shredded Hundred-Leaf Tofu*, features a stack of shredded tofu skin that is springy and chewy. The sesame oil, rice wine, and ginger combination used with the hearty *Chicken Rice with Black Sesame Oil*, which is presented in a small ceramic pot, creates a deeply memorable aroma. The rice is rendered heartwarmingly flavorful, and the chicken is almost melt-in-your-mouth tender.

Pork Tongue Wrapped in Pork Ear



Preserved Egg in Peeled Pepper



THE GUEST HOUSE (請客樓)

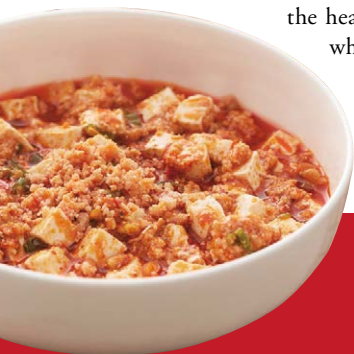
☎ (02) 2321-1818

📍 No. 12, Sec. 1, Zhongxiao E. Rd., Zhongzheng Dist., Taipei City (台北市中正區忠孝東路一段12號)

🌐 www.sheratongrandtaipei.com

📄 <https://reurl.cc/OkbWA3> (Michelin Guide)

Chicken Rice with Black Sesame Oil



Braised Tofu with Fish Roe



Steamed Pork Intestines Soup with Chinese Herbs



Cantonese Style Crispy Roast Duck



Le Palais

Le Palais specializes in Cantonese cuisine, with selections from other Chinese regional cuisines. It is located in Datong District, in the Palais de Chine Hotel. The nearest Taipei Metro stop is MRT Taipei Main Station.

Exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey!
“The longstanding Macanese chef never fails to wow with his exquisite cooking. His Cantonese-style crispy roast duck is especially impressive; consider pre-ordering it to avoid missing out. Chinese spinach and salted egg dumplings are the dim sum of choice with colourful filling enrobed in a translucent skin. White gourd stuffed with crab meat is another painstakingly-made specialty.”

Michelin Guide’s Point of View



Crispy Roast Baby Duck

Le Palais, which features a sumptuous décor synthesizing subdued Oriental and French aesthetics, is widely recognized as one of the premier restaurants in the greater China region. It is Taiwan's exclusive Michelin three-star selection, earning this accolade for each Red Guide edition to date. Located on the 17th floor of the top-tier luxury Palais de Chine Hotel, “bask in the warm morning sunshine or enjoy the magnificent city night view.”

The restaurant serves Cantonese dim sum and banquet cuisine of the highest quality, with items and item ingredients changing in accordance with the availability of seasonal ingredients. Beyond the shrimp/crab white gourd offering and *Cantonese Style Crispy Roast Duck* mentioned above, other signature dishes that require pre-ordering are the *Crispy Roast Baby Duck*, *Crispy Deep-Fried Chicken*, and *Barbecue Pork*.

Slices are wrapped inside a green onion pancake with a rich plum sauce. The pork creation features pork butt first marinated in a special house sauce, then roasted, and finally basted with maltose sauce. 📌

Pan-Fried Daikon Radish Cake with Minced Cantonese Sausage



Le Palais Signature Barbecue Pork

EDITOR'S NOTE

Foodies rejoice! The Michelin Taiwan culinary map expands further in 2022, with the addition of Tainan and Kaohsiung cities.

LE PALAIS (頤宮)

☎ (02) 2181-9985

📍 No. 3, Sec. 1, Chengde Rd., Datong Dist., Taipei City (台北市大同區承德路一段 3 號)

🌐 www.palaisdechinehotel.com

★ <https://reurl.cc/WX46Wk> (Michelin Guide)



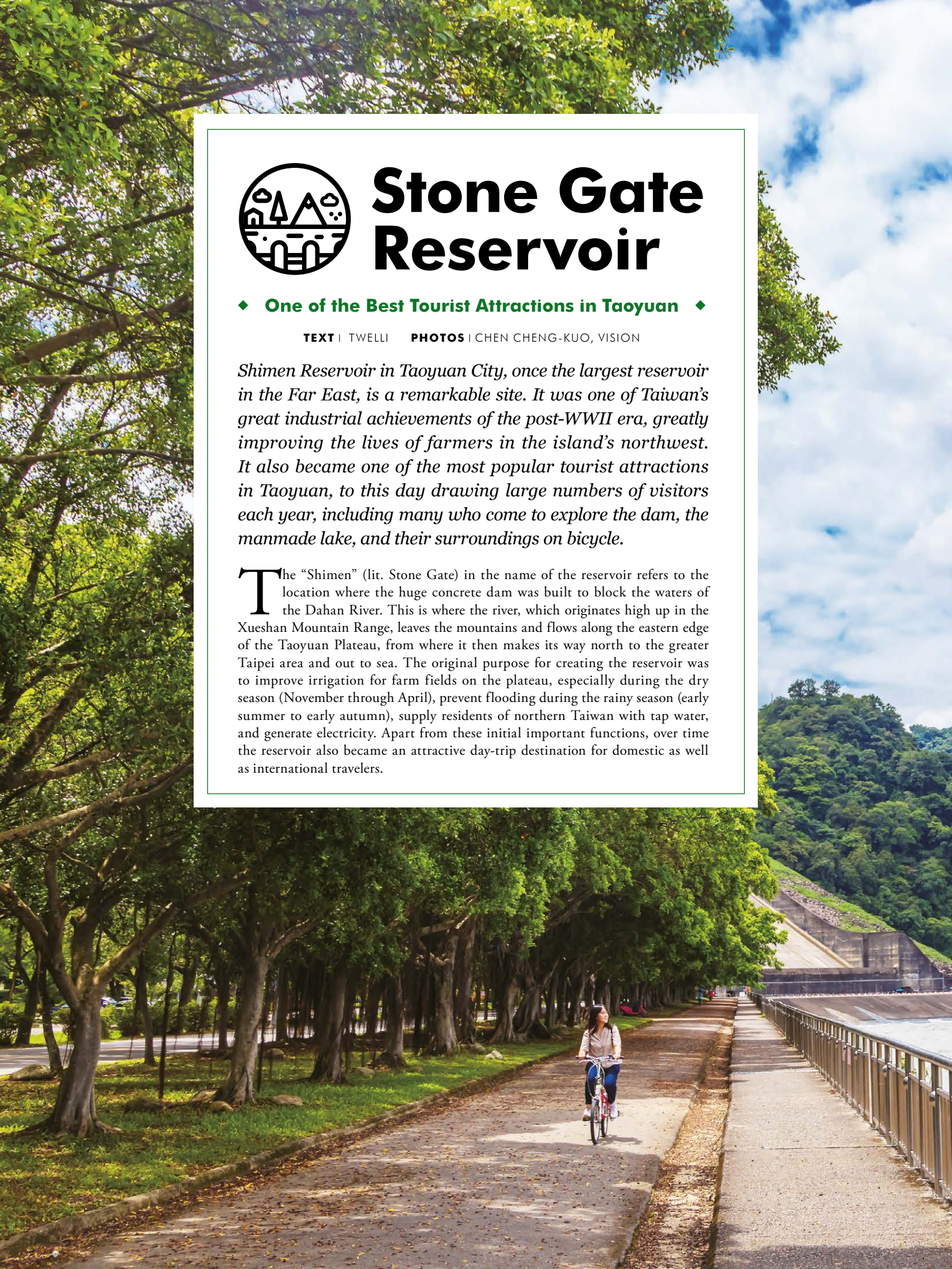
Stone Gate Reservoir

◆ One of the Best Tourist Attractions in Taoyuan ◆

TEXT | TWELLI PHOTOS | CHEN CHENG-KUO, VISION

Shimen Reservoir in Taoyuan City, once the largest reservoir in the Far East, is a remarkable site. It was one of Taiwan's great industrial achievements of the post-WWII era, greatly improving the lives of farmers in the island's northwest. It also became one of the most popular tourist attractions in Taoyuan, to this day drawing large numbers of visitors each year, including many who come to explore the dam, the manmade lake, and their surroundings on bicycle.

The "Shimen" (lit. Stone Gate) in the name of the reservoir refers to the location where the huge concrete dam was built to block the waters of the Dahan River. This is where the river, which originates high up in the Xueshan Mountain Range, leaves the mountains and flows along the eastern edge of the Taoyuan Plateau, from where it then makes its way north to the greater Taipei area and out to sea. The original purpose for creating the reservoir was to improve irrigation for farm fields on the plateau, especially during the dry season (November through April), prevent flooding during the rainy season (early summer to early autumn), supply residents of northern Taiwan with tap water, and generate electricity. Apart from these initial important functions, over time the reservoir also became an attractive day-trip destination for domestic as well as international travelers.



Reservoir Trivia

- Construction took 9 years
- 2,000 people had to be displaced
- 7,500 people took part in the construction
- Reservoir is 16km long
- Dam is 133m high and 360m long
- Because of silting, depth of reservoir is only 40m (down from 100m in the early days)

Riding along the After Bay of Shimen Reservoir

Below the Dam

Riding a bicycle around Shimen Reservoir is a popular activity for day-trippers. There used to be a Merida bike-rental shop just outside the reservoir's main car park, but operations were ceased some time ago. Time will tell if operators will set up shop again in the future, once domestic travel picks up momentum after the pandemic.

If you don't have your own bike (and vehicle to get it to the reservoir), you can consider renting a **YouBike** public bike from docking stations that are, unfortunately, not in the immediate vicinity of the reservoir and require a ride of about 4km (nearest station) to the dam. For locations of the docking stations, check the station map on the YouBike website (www.youbike.com.tw) or app. If you take a bus on the **Taiwan Tourist Shuttle's Shimen Reservoir Route** (No. 503; operates on weekends only), which launches from Zhongli Bus Station, you can get off at the Shihmen Reservoir Administration (Shihmen Grass Land) bus stop and rent a YouBike from one of the two docking stations close by.

When approaching the reservoir via Provincial Highway No. 4, you'll first see a smaller dam just below the highway bridge that crosses the Dahan River. This is the **After Bay Weir**, which has the important function of keeping the water in check that comes rushing down from the main dam into the After Bay, ensuring that it runs smoothly downstream without damaging the riverbanks and the highway bridge.

From the main Shimen Reservoir parking lot, just beyond the toll gate (tickets are NT\$80/car; free entrance for bicyclists), you can ride your bike across the weir and take a look at the After Bay to the left and the highway bridge to the right. After reaching the far end of the weir, follow the road on the west bank of the After Bay a bit further. There is the simple **Fude Temple** (dedicated to the Earth God) here, facing the main dam in the distance, and you will also pass the **Near Water Café** on your right-hand side (see end of article).

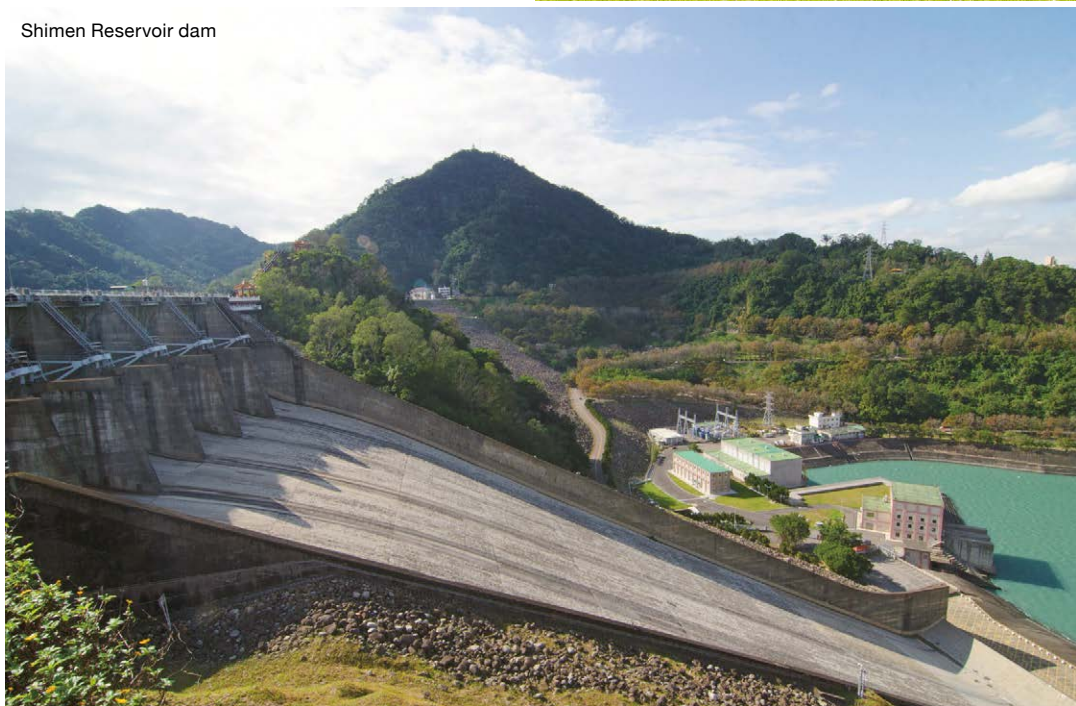
Note: *At time of writing the weir was closed due to Covid-19 restrictions.*



Nanyuan Eco Park



Shimen Reservoir dam





Sections of large metal fence used to catch wood floating in the reservoir

On returning to the car park area, turn right and ride along the east bank of the After Bay. You'll soon come to the **Nanyuan Eco Park**, a spacious green area with boardwalks across artificial ponds, rest pavilions, and outdoor installation artworks. There are a number of interesting decommissioned materials from the dam facility on display, including sections of a large metal fence used to catch floating wood in the reservoir and a giant section of water pipe (4.57m in diameter) that was part of the dam's power plant. Walk inside and clap your hands to hear a loud echo.

Coming closer to the dam, you'll clearly see the **power plant** on the opposite side of the bay in the shadow of the giant wall of concrete. While crossing at the bottom of the dam, you'll pass the point where water is released from the reservoir in spectacular fashion during times of heavy rainfall. The release is known in Chinese as *xiehong* (lit. "flood discharge").

To get to the top of the dam and the reservoir behind it, ride all the way back to the parking lot near the toll gate, then turn right onto **Huanhu Road**, the main access road to the dam. While climbing this uphill road through lush forest you'll pass a popular nature park on the steep hillside, **Xizhou Garden**. The mountain behind is **Mt. Xizhou**, a great area for short hikes. From the car park to the dam it's about 1.5km, and it can take up to 20 minutes to ride up the steep road.

Shortly before reaching the dam, you'll pass a row of restaurants serving fresh fish from the reservoir, known in Chinese as *huoyu* (lit. "living fish"). Among the fish on the menus are various types of carp, including black carp, bighead carp, grass carp, and goldfish, prepared in a variety of ways, such as steaming, stir-frying, and deep-frying. Meals are typically multi-course affairs for groups seated around round tables.



The dam seen from the Daba Songtai hill



Shi Men Sheng Jing Tower



Near Water Café

On and Behind the Dam

Beyond the restaurants, to the left you'll see a gray-facade building housing a visitor center, and the dam comes into view on the right-hand side. From the top of the dam you can enjoy marvelous vistas. Look down and take in the view of the After Bay, the weir, the highway bridge in the distance, and the Taoyuan Plateau beyond. On the other side you'll see the calm greenish waters of the reservoir and the beautiful verdant low mountains framing this artificial lake. At the mid-section of the dam is a Chinese-style pavilion, and behind that a small hill with an observation terrace and another pavilion. Walk up the stairs for excellent views of the dam, reservoir, and far beyond from even higher up. The hill is fittingly named **Daba Songtai** (lit. "Big Dam Lofty Platform").

Reaching the far end of the dam, you'll see a small tower at

the center of a roundabout inscribed with four Chinese characters, *Shi Men Sheng Jing* (lit. "Shimen Winning Scenery"). This is a popular place for visitors to take pictures. If you have an interest in learning more about the history of Shimen Reservoir, you can find more information and old photographs inside the Yi Shan Ge building (Shimen Reservoir Museum) right beside the roundabout. Next door is the Yi Shan Ge café; buy a coffee there or a light meal (they sell soy-braised foods, luwei), sit on the plaza outside (weather permitting), and enjoy the reservoir scenery.

Shimen Reservoir is well known for its many maple trees, the leaves of which turn a beautiful red and brown during the winter months. If you visit during this time of the year, continue a bit further along the road past the tower and you'll come to a



Reservoir yachts

particularly beautiful maple tree grove. The “maple leaf” (fengye) trees you’ll see in Taiwan are mostly green maple (*acer serrulatum*) and Taiwanese sweet gum (*liquidambar formosana*), the latter of which is in fact not a maple tree, despite its maple-like leaves.

After returning to the eastern end of the dam, you can continue your ride along the northern bank of the reservoir. The gently ascending, curvy road there takes you to some picture-perfect spots from where you can take in the reservoir and mountain scenery. The scenic road goes all the way to the Amuping Marina (8km from the dam) and there are numerous cafés along the way where you can stop for a rest.

If you don’t want to ride that far, you can get to the mid-section of the reservoir by boat instead. Touring yachts launch from the marina close to the dam. A one-hour lake cruise takes you past a number of scenic spots, including Longzhuwan (lit. “Dragon Pearl Bay”) and Menghuan Pingyuan (lit. “Dream Grass Plain”). From Amuping Marina, you can also take lake cruises to the opposite shore (“Ginger Island”; incl. a 30-min. land excursion).

Note: At time of writing, yacht cruises were suspended as part of Covid-19 restrictions.

If, after exploring the reservoir, you are looking for a quiet place to sit down for an afternoon tea/coffee and/or light meal, consider the aforementioned **Near Water Café** on the west bank of the After Bay. (If the After Bay Weir should be closed to visitors at the time, you can reach the café via a side road off Provincial Highway No. 4, a short distance west from the highway bridge.) Inside a European-villa-style three-story building, the café has large windows with excellent views of the After Bay and the dam. The design is simple modern chic with comfortable leather chairs.

Opened in October 2019, the café is best known for its superb location close to the reservoir. Outside is a small garden and a patio with potted cactuses, adding to the private-home feel of the place. The coffee served is of the finest quality. If you are particular about your brew, you can opt for drip-coffee selections, including Yirgacheffe, Kenya AA, and Elida beans. Pair this with fine fruit tarts (try the delicious blueberry and lemon tarts!) and waffles. If you’ve worked up an appetite from the biking around Shimen Reservoir, the café also has delicious light set meals on the menu. 📍

NEAR WATER CAFÉ (尼爾瓦特 CAFÉ)

☎ (03) 471-2192

📍 No. 105, Lane 690, Daping Section, Longyan Rd., Longtan District, Taoyuan City (桃園市龍潭區龍源路大平段 690 巷 105 號)

🌐 bit.ly/2UYRNCN



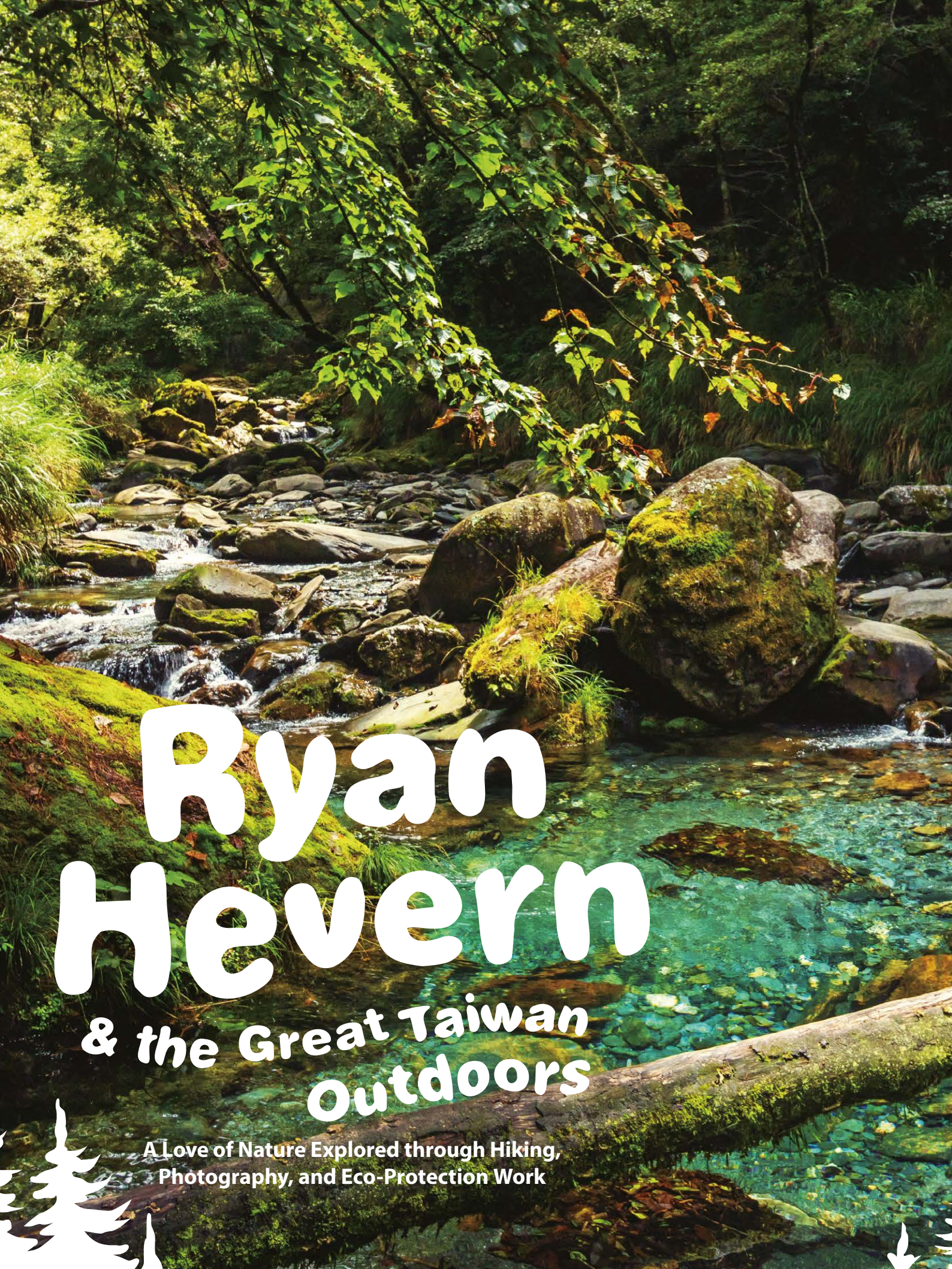
Fine coffee and tarts



🗺 ENGLISH AND CHINESE

After Bay Bridge 後池大橋
After Bay Weir 後池堰
Amuping Marina 阿姆坪遊艇碼頭
bighead carp 大頭鱧
black carp 烏鰱
Daba Songtai 大壩高台
Dahan River 大漢溪
Daxi 大溪
Fude Temple 福德祠
Ginger Island 薑母島
goldfish 鯽魚
grass carp 草魚
green maple 青楓

Huanhu Road 環湖路
huoyu 活魚
Mt. Xizhou 溪洲山
Nanyuan Eco Park 南苑生態公園
Shimen Reservoir 石門水庫
Shimen Reservoir Dam 石門水庫水壩
Shi Men Sheng Jing 石門勝景
Taiwanese sweet gum 槭樹
Taoyuan Plateau 桃園台地
Xizhou Park 溪洲公園
Xueshan Mountain Range 雪山山脈
xiehong 洩洪
Yi Shan Ge 依山閣



Ryan Hevern

**& the Great Taiwan
Outdoors**

A Love of Nature Explored through Hiking,
Photography, and Eco-Protection Work



TEXT | RICK CHARETTE
PHOTOS | RYAN HEVERN

Expat Californian Ryan Hevern has a love for the great outdoors that constantly keeps him on the go. In Taiwan for six-and-a-half years now, he expresses his passion for Taiwan's natural side through many different pursuits, as we shall find out, including a passion for bringing others along on his expeditions big and small in the hope they'll fall in love with Nature's fascinations too and, hopefully, also develop a commitment to environmental protection.

An Unusual Route to Taiwan & First Impressions

"My route to Taiwan was a bit roundabout," he says. "A friend I hadn't seen in some time had started a travel company in Borneo, and I visited, thinking to get out of my California bubble. I ended up doing travel marketing and PR and working as a jungle guide for about two years. I also ended up doing guide work for National Geographic in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia."

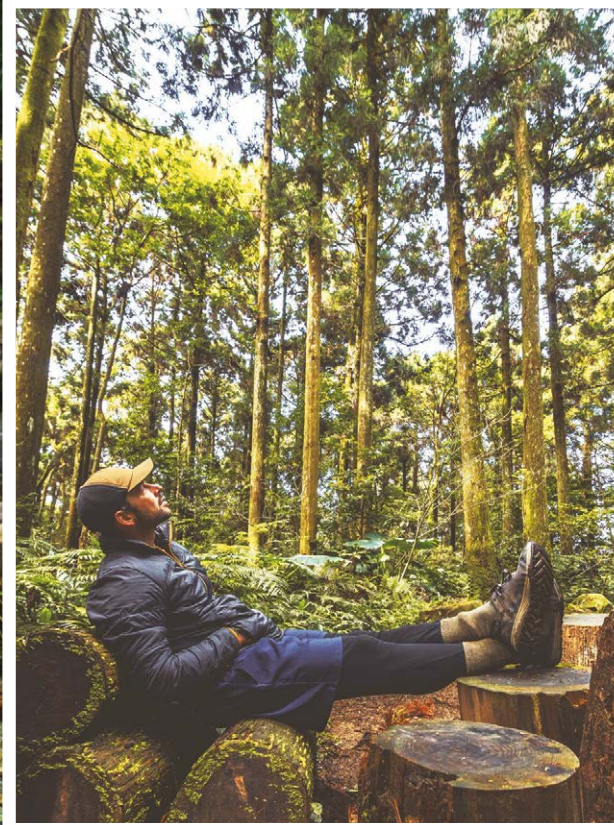
Ryan came to Taiwan looking for more economic stability. "It was a difficult transition. California's Bay Area has a lot of people, but nothing like the greater Taipei region. And remember, I was directly transitioning from years in Borneo."

Things started turning around after about six months, when he co-founded **Taiwan Adventure Outings (TAO)**, a project meant to offer "fun and exciting outdoor adventures combined with education and environmental awareness." "We started with an informal online presence, gathering a community of like-minded people who wanted to explore Taiwan's outdoors. I was able to escape the city, and quickly fell in love with Taiwan's beauty, its incredible diversity of cultures and landscapes." With time TAO became more formalized, but then we ran into some obstacles and, ultimately, COVID hit. "TAO is on hold now," Ryan says, "but I'm hoping things can be started up again soon."

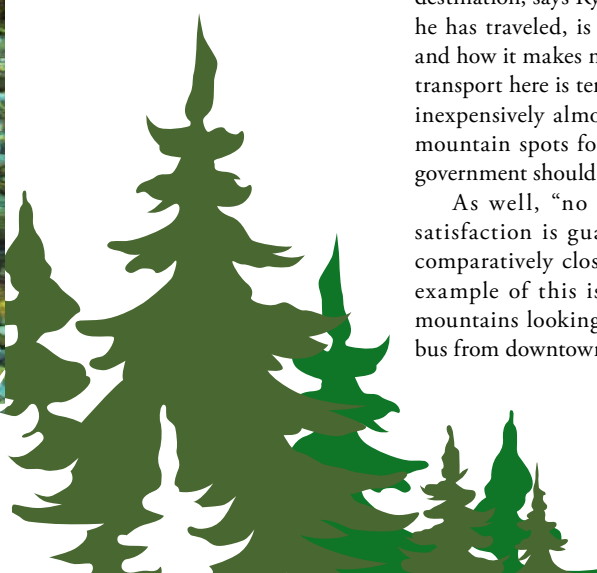
Taiwan as a Travel Destination

Perhaps the thing that best qualifies Taiwan as a travel destination, says Ryan, and sets it apart from all the other places he has traveled, is the efficient public-transportation network and how it makes nature and the outdoors so accessible. "Public transport here is terrific, and gets you quickly, comfortably, and inexpensively almost everywhere on the island, even to high-mountain spots for hiking. This is really something that the government should emphasize in international promotion."

As well, "no matter your level of ability or fitness, satisfaction is guaranteed. Quality trails of all grades are comparatively close at hand, even from city centers. A good example of this is **Yangmingshan National Park**. In the mountains looking right down on Taipei, it's just an hour by bus from downtown, and the park has trails of all levels."



NATURE LOVER
 Drawn to the great outdoors, Ryan feels at home in Taiwan's mountains and forests



Suggested Hikes

“Taiwan, truly, has an endless supply of superb scenic hikes, for people of all levels. But what I think should also be more systematically marketed overseas is the incredible array of easily accessible outdoor adventures you can enjoy, for such a small place. Your single-trip options are incredible: hiking, river tracing, rock climbing, surfing, snorkeling, scuba diving ... you name it. There’s something for everyone, whatever their level of comfort or skill with nature and the outdoors, and for beginners especially public transport provides quick access, often within 30 minutes, from city cores. If you want to be outdoorsy, Taiwan is pretty much perfect.”

Taiwan is a ruggedly mountainous island with hundreds of peaks over 3,000 meters, and Ryan considers the *Baiyue*, or “100 Peaks,” the hundred pinnacles over 3,000 meters judged to be the most rewarding/spectacular, to be a unique national treasure.

“The *Baiyue* are well worthwhile as another focal point for tourism promotion overseas. Because of Taiwan’s first-rate public transportation, many of them are easy to get to. Some people might be intimidated by **Yushan (Mt. Jade)** simply because it is Taiwan’s tallest mountain, but public transport gets you quite close to the peak, and the two-day hike is relatively moderate.”



Mountain view from Datong Village in Taroko National Park

Tree frog



Bamboo viper



Taiwan’s public transport is so good, he says, that he advises caution if tackling places like the **Hehuanshan (Mt. Hehuan)** peaks. Taiwan’s highest highway point passes just below the peaks, at the Wuling Pass, elevation 3,275 meters. The various pinnacles are not much higher, but require shorter and longer treks. “You can get there so fast from the lowlands that you do not have time to properly acclimate, so travelers must be aware.”

His single favorite hike? “I’d have to say that my favorite hike is up to the village of **Datong** in the mountains off the **Shakadang Trail** in **Taroko Gorge** (Taroko National Park).” There’s also a route up from the Taroko Visitor Center (Dali-Datong

Trail). “It’s one of the indigenous villages up there, and there are a number of homestay operations. I can also say this is my single favorite place to be in Taiwan – specifically **DaDaoDeJia**, a homestay that overlooks Datong. This is the former chief’s house, and the homestay is run by his son’s wife. I’ve visited numerous times, and have become close with them. The setting is deeply tranquil, and there are terrific views overlooking the Shakadang Gorge, the Pacific Ocean, and the rest of Taroko. The ocean sunrises are magnificent.” Moderate-to-good fitness is required for this trail.

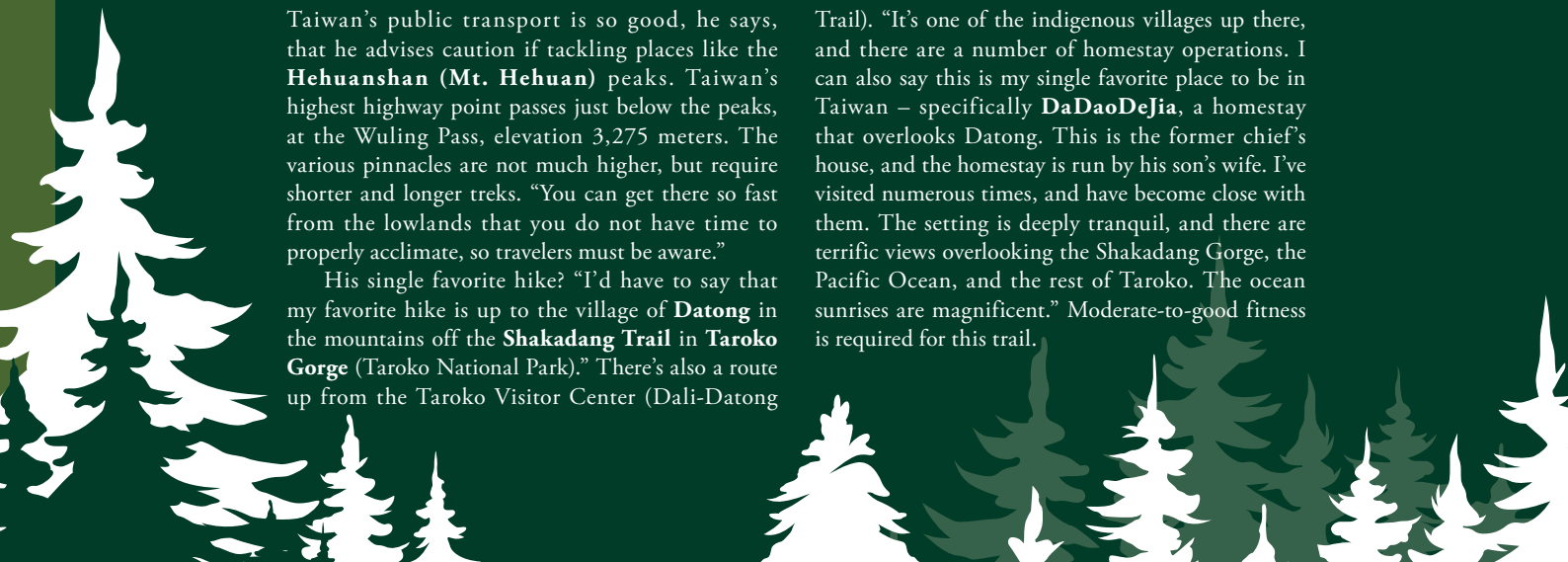




Photo Workshops

Ryan runs photo workshops with three different titles: *High Mountain Workshop*, *Night Hike Photography Workshop*, and *Temples of Taipei*. For the first two, you are right out on the trails, Ryan serving both as your hiking guide and photography instructor. The night hike option, he says, is the most popular. “For this, we generally hit the trails right on Taipei’s edge. The trails of the low **Four Beasts Mountain**, stretched out just south of the Taipei 101 tower, are a good example. People, including locals, are amazed at the amount of wildlife to be seen with the city lights still twinkling in view. We’ll spot snakes, lizards, birds, flying squirrels, civets, et cetera. Taiwan spottings of mammals of good size are more limited, especially on city edges.” He developed his zest for headlamp night hiking in Borneo, and says he has found the abundance of wild Taiwan nightlife really eye-opening.

Taiwan National Clean Up Day

Another endeavor Ryan is involved in is the annual Taiwan National Clean Up Day, held each summer, for which he is a co-organizer. “It started with the TAO,” he says. “Our hiking community wanted to give back to the larger community. We started with beach clean-ups in Wai’ao and Fulong (on the Northeast Coast), and are now up to over 20 locations each year. We spend time reaching out to different groups to host clean-up events in different localities, and there has been great enthusiasm.”

Parkbus Taiwan

This is his newest involvement, a recent transplantation of an initiative launched in Canada. The Parkbus goal is to connect city dwellers with natural areas they may have previously thought inaccessible, through provision of “express, reservable” transportation. “Our goal is to get people into the outdoors who don’t want to own their own means of transport. We get you to the destination, and when there you can choose to tag along with the main guided group, or head off on your own. We of course also provide your return transport.”

For more on the hikes and the various ventures Ryan has just talked about, visit his *Down to Explore* online portal at ryanheuern.com. 📱

📱 ENGLISH AND CHINESE

Baiyue 百岳
 DaDaoDeJia 達道的家
 Dali-Datong Trail 大禮大同步道
 Four Beasts Mountain 四獸山
 Hehuanshan 合歡山
 Shakadang Trail 砂卡礑步道
 Wuling 武嶺
 Yushan 玉山

Beach clean-up day



Parkbus outing

“Two Iron” Rides

How to Take a Bicycle on a Railway Train

TEXT & PHOTOS | VISION

When reading about taking bicycles onto a train in Taiwan, you'll often come across the Chinese term *Liang Tie* (lit. “Two Iron”). This is in reference to the “iron” character (*tie*) used in both the Chinese name for railway (*tielu*; lit. “iron road”) and bicycle (*tiema*; lit. “iron horse”). How do you do a “Two Iron” ride? Read on to find out!

On the official website of the Taiwan Railways Administration (TRA) you will find detailed information about how to take a bicycle onto a train. Go to tip.railway.gov.tw/tra-tip-web/tip and select *Tour ticket*, *Bicycle-friendly train*. The information is quite comprehensive; let's summarize some of the key points below.

Two Options

Bike in bag: Fold or disassemble (take out front wheel and attach to frame with a strap) your bike so that it fits in a suitable bicycle bag (plastic or cloth bags are not accepted), with no parts sticking out. This allows you to take your bike onto any train type in Taiwan (including High Speed Rail trains), but not including branch-line trains (like Pingxi and Alishan).

Bike on train without bag: Without putting the bicycle in a suitable bag, you are only allowed to take it onto a car of a suitable, designated train type. Note that in some stations, including large and crowded stations like Taipei Main Station, bicycles are not allowed.



Train Types and Tickets for Option 2

Without a bag you are only allowed to take your bike onto trains of the following types: **Chu-Kuang Express** (Nos. 81, 82, 666, 701, 708, 712, 751, 754, and 758) and all **Local Train** (incl. Local Express) services. Bicycles are allowed only in the last car of local trains (based on direction of train, not car number). Follow the instructions of railway staff when boarding, and avoid inconveniencing other passengers.

Tickets for bicycles that are not inside a bag cannot be booked online, and have to be bought at the counter of a railway station. Note that for each train only a limited number of bicycle tickets are available. Bicycle tickets are half the price of adult tickets.

Best Areas for Bicycle-and-Train Rides

You can find excellent bike paths and bike routes all around the main island of Taiwan. While not all of them are close to railway stations, some of them are perfect for bike-and-rail fun. Probably the best area is the East Rift Valley between the cities of Hualien and Taitung in east Taiwan. Home to bucolic scenery, framed by tall mountain ranges, with mostly flat and well-paved roads and dedicated bikeways, this is a wonderful destination for cyclists.

The trunk railway line runs right through the middle of the valley and has numerous stations where you can get off one train and hop back on another, allowing you to choose the best stretches according to your preferences. Two other areas recommended for bike-and-rail trips are the coast of Miaoli and Hsinchu counties (long bikeways along the coast), and Yilan County (especially along the Dongshan River). 📌

📌 ENGLISH AND CHINESE

Alishan 阿里山
 Chu-Kuang Express 莒光號
 East Rift Valley 花東縱谷
 Liang Tie 兩鐵
 Local Express 區間快車
 Local Train 區間車
 Pingxi 平溪



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www.eclathotels.com

FOOD Taipei

CHIOU HWA Restaurant 九華樓

The signature dish of CHIOU HWA is "Roasted Peking Duck." The secret to this delicacy is the selection of fat ducks with tender meat, mainly raised in Yilan. The preparation begins with filling the duck with spices and seasonings, such as ginger, scallion, and star anise. The duck is then stitched up, blanched to tighten the skin, colored with maltose and red vinegar, and hung to dry for a night. Before it is removed from the oven, the duck is slowly and evenly basted to make it translucent and lustrous. The pancakes complement the crispy duck skin perfectly while the pickled ginger inside makes the taste refreshing.



No. 369, Linsen N. Rd., Zhongshan Dist., Taipei City
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BUY Taipei

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cha FOR TEA ToGo offers a wide variety of stunningly flavorful tea drinks. Apart from bubble tea ("pearl milk tea"), a must-drink when visiting Taiwan, you also have to try the 913 King's Tea, which is only available at cha FOR TEA ToGo. In addition to the pleasant flavor of high-mountain Oolong tea, you can also experience the sweet after taste of ginseng.



TenRen's Tea Taipei - Ximen Branch (天仁茗茶台北-西門店)
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Tel: +886-2-2361-1986
Hours: 10:00~21:30



BUY Yunlin

Rural Community Shop 甘苦人農村社區小舖

Kouhu Township in Yunlin County is an important source for agricultural products in Taiwan, produced using natural farming methods that allow the revitalization of the earth. In terms of fishery, you can witness the processing of mullet roe, breeding of eels, cultivation of clams, as well as raising of giant grouper and white shrimp. Organized tours allow you to experience digging for clams and catching shrimp.

The "Kankujen" Rural Community Shop provides guided tour services, food and agriculture education experiences, tours with eco themes, art corridor explorations, flavorful meals and afternoon tea, recommendations for theme tours and sale of produce by farms and fishery operations. Apart from the scenery, tourists can also get to know the friendly and down-to-earth locals and sample the delicious food.



Jinhu Recreational Farm Development Association, Kouhu Township, Yunlin County
(雲林縣口湖鄉金湖休閒農業發展協會)
Tel: (05) 790-6601 E-mail: susun.104@yahoo.com.tw
www.kankujen.com

FOOD Taipei

Hot Pot TAKAO1972 打狗霸

From the stock to the ingredients to the spices, everything is carefully selected and strictly controlled.

In addition to Japanese style, hot and spicy, stone hot pot, and sukiyaki, there are also limited soup bases that are introduced according to the season. Takao 1972 is the first restaurant to combine hot pot dining with Japanese cuisine. In addition to the hot-pot selections, the restaurant serves freshly made Japanese dishes, including black tuna sashimi, temaki, and sushi. Diners can enjoy richer and more diversified choices.



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Spring 2023	June 1 - July 29, 2022	October, 2022	February, 2023

- For the specific application schedule, please refer to the admission prospectus of the year.
- Online application only.** Please refer to International Students Application website for details: <https://bds.oia.ntnu.edu.tw/bds/apply>

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	English	●	●	●
Arts	Fine Arts	●	●	●
	Design	●	●	●
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