

TAIWAN

Cycling Routes

Taipei, New Taipei, Taichung, Tainan, Kaohsiung,
and Taitung on two wheels



Taiwan
THE HEART OF ASIA



Introduction

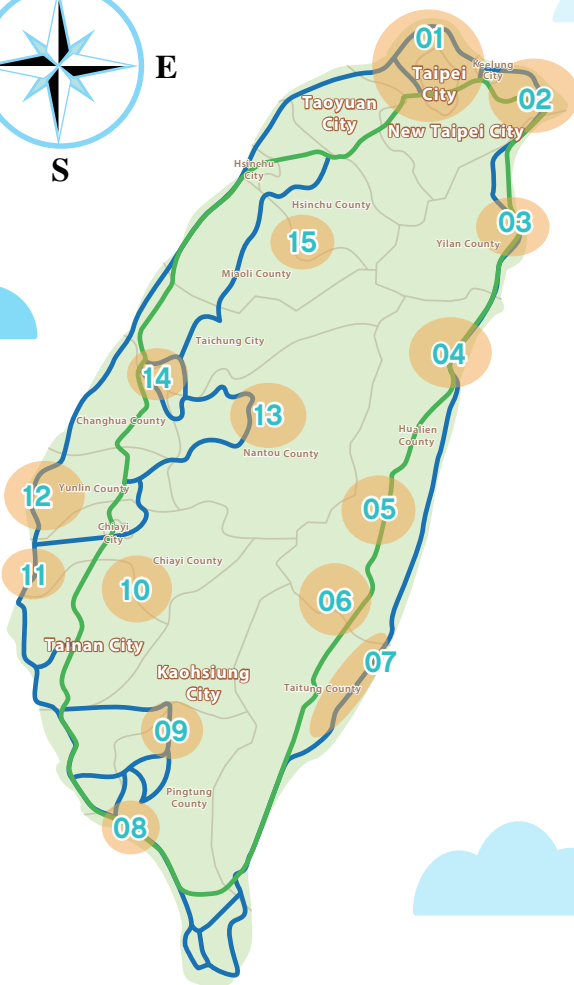
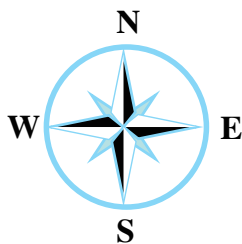
Taiwan's wondrous range of landscapes is often what creates the most powerful memories among international visitors. A new travel trend in recent years is that more and more overseas travelers are coming specifically to explore these landscapes on bike outings from short and relaxed to ambitious (round the island), taking advantage of the first-rate cycling network that has been built up over the past two decades.

The moniker "Bicycle Kingdom" was attached firmly to Taiwan in the 1980s, during the Taiwan Economic Miracle period, when the island became the global leader in churning out bikes and the "Made in Taiwan" label established a presence on roads and bikeways around the globe. However, cycling in Taiwan was not common, primarily the domain of youngsters, oldsters, and a small cadre of eccentric hobbyists.

Those days have ridden off into the dustbin of history. Interest in cycling for pleasure and/or exercise has exploded in the past two decades. Today there are thousands of kilometers of bike lanes on roadways and dedicated pathways on the main island and many offshore islands, there is an army of inexpensive rental stations set up wherever people gather in number for recreational cycling, and there are many competitive bike races and family-friendly leisure-cycling gatherings that fill up the calendar each year.

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Cycling Around Taiwan

In many of the globe's travel destinations, travel by bicycle can be inconvenient, and at times even ill-advised. In Taiwan, biking is a breeze. First and perhaps foremost, by now you are surely aware that this destination is one of the safest on the planet, in terms of biking and every other travel facet.

Taiwan jumped on the cycling-for-pleasure wave decades ago. On the main island and its offshore islands, bikeways and bike-rental facilities have been set up throughout, avidly encouraging everyone, old through young, tour groups and family groups, to throw themselves into nature-loving exercise.

The Taiwan biking world is nigh perfect for international travelers here for experience and adventure travel. What experiences and what adventures, you say? The articles in this booklet have been specially selected from the Taiwan Tourism Bureau's respected flagship publication, *Travel in Taiwan*. Read the magazine online at travelintaiwan.net.

The articles selected for this booklet take you all around the main island, in a counter-clockwise fashion, and out to some of Taiwan's beautiful offshore islands. Our *Travel in Taiwan* team of writers is filled with outdoor experience-and-adventure travel enthusiasts, who serve as your personal guide on each foray, describing the routes in detail and also providing practical tips on such important matters as how to handle your bike transport and where to rent bikes locally. A key goal in the article selection is to best showcase for you Taiwan's incredible diversity of terrain and cultural sights.

16 Bicycle Routes

- 01 North Coast Route (Gold Coast, Shuangwan, Wanta, Wanjin)
- 02 Northeast Coast Route (Golden Mountain & Sea Route)
- 03 Yilan Seaside, Lanyang Plain Route (Kavalan Route)
- 04 East Rift Valley Route (Huilan Manbo)
- 05 East Rift Valley Route (Hot Springs, Forests, Tectonic Plates Discovery Route)
- 06 East Rift Valley – Rural Scenery (Indigenous Music, Paddy Field, Mountains and Water)
- 07 East Coast Route – Chenggong Sanxiantai (Riding to Success Route)

- 08 Dapeng Bay Route (Dapeng Bay)
- 09 Maolin, Liugui, Laonong River (Kaohsiung Mountains)
- 10 Siraya Route (Ling Po-Guantian Route)
- 11 Southwest Coast Route (Taijiang)
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- 13 Sun Moon Lake Route (Sun Moon Lake)
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- 15 Tri-Mountain Route (Lion's Head Mountain)
- 16 Penghu Route (Gaillardia Route)



Taipei's Riverside Bike Paths

Beloved by Residents and Tourists Alike

If you like the idea of riding a bicycle in Taipei City but worry about the dense traffic in the capital's streets, head to the riverside parks. The city has established an excellent network of well-paved dedicated bikeways along all its main rivers.



Riding along the Tamsui River

Tamsui River Riverside Bike Paths

Taipei's riverside bikeway system circles the city, taking riders along four different rivers. Bike-rental services are available at numerous points along the system, which has a total of 111km of paths, mostly located in the city's well-developed riverside parks.

Foreign expatriates and tourists especially like the Tamsui River stretch from **Dadaocheng Wharf** to **Longshan Riverside Park**. The city's west side was the first developed in the Chinese imperial era and the start and end points give direct access to two of Taipei's oldest districts, the Wanhua and Dadaocheng neighborhoods. At Dadaocheng Wharf there are multiple bike-rental operations, plus a plethora of cargo-container food and drink stands. This has made the wharf area a nighttime hotspot, with many coming out for rides to take advantage of the cool evening breezes.



Dadaocheng Wharf

Wanhua

Longshan Riverside Park gives immediate access to Wanhua District. The first urban settlement in the Taipei Basin taken up by today's Taipei City grew here, as a riverport town where the Dahan and Xindian rivers meet to form the Tamsui. Today the old district, rich in historical architecture, proudly maintains many elements of the traditional Taiwanese lifestyle.

The heart of the community is the large and busy **Bangka Longshan Temple**, founded in 1738. Its surrounding area is filled with old-time markets and family-run shops. The temple is one of the world's greatest showcases of Chinese temple art, renowned for its exquisite stone sculptures, woodcarvings, and bronze work.

Along the temple's east wall is **Herb Lane**, packed with shops stuffed to bursting with medicinal herbs. **Bopiliao Historic Block** is a renovated city-block section, filled with heritage buildings, that took shape as a commercial-trade street in the late 1700s/early 1800s.



Bopiliao Historic Block



Longshan Temple

Dadaocheng/Beimen

The heart of the Dadaocheng neighborhood, **Dihua Street**, is reached just moments after passing through the large dike gate beside Dadocheng Wharf. Han Chinese moved here in the 1850s after internecine fighting in Bangka, and narrow Dihua Street emerged as the first commercial street in the new, quickly thriving riverport settlement.

Lined shoulder to shoulder with one renovated heritage narrow-façade shophouse after another, today it remains north Taiwan's premier emporium for regional specialty goods as well as for traditional Chinese medicines, traditional-style fabrics, and tea.

The **Beimen** (North Gate) area, filled with important historical sites, lies between Dadaocheng and Wanhua. The gate itself was the main portal into the old walled city. Other key sites include the **Beimen Post Office**, **Futai Street Mansion**, and **National Taiwan Museum Railway Department Park**.

Yongle Market on Dihua Street



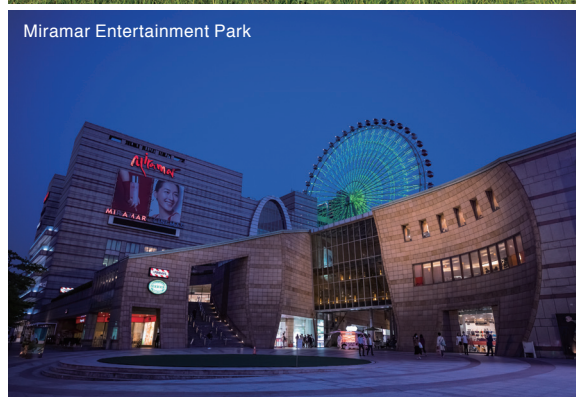
National Taiwan Museum Railway Department Park



Dajia Riverside Park



Miramar Entertainment Park



Keelung River Right/Left Bank Bike Paths

Taipei's riverside bikeways stretch east-west right through the urban core along the city's share of the Keelung River, with bikeways along both the waterway's right (north) and left (south) banks. On the north side the main riverside park is **Yuanshan Riverside Park**, on the south is **Dajia Riverside Park**. Both are family-oriented, with facilities for all ages.

Close to Yuanshan Riverside Park is the Chinese palace-style **Grand Hotel** sitting atop a low plateau, for over half a century a key visual landmark seen from across the city. The sprawling **Shilin Tourist Night Market** has a claim to being Taiwan's best and most famous. It started as a day market near a Keelung River wharf in 1909, with the night market inaugurated in 1913. The large **Miramar Entertainment Park** is a modern complex housing a multi-story shopping mall and IMAX theater. On its roof is a 70m-high Ferris wheel that provides a terrific cityscape panorama. Further afield is the **National Palace Museum**, repository of the world's greatest collection of Chinese imperial artworks and artifacts.

Xinyi District/Xinyi Road Bike Path

The bustling Xinyi District is where Taiwan's shared-bike system began. Home to Taiwan's tallest building, a large 24-hour bookstore, and tons of trendy clubs, high-end restaurants, and fancy malls, the area is also quite bike-friendly, with cycling lanes along and between the main thoroughfares.

The star attraction of the area is the iconic **Taipei 101 tower**, which at 508m was once the world's tallest building. The postmodern bamboo- or pagoda-shaped glass-and-steel structure is an impressive sight from below, but wait until you ride the ultra-fast elevators that carry you to the 89th floor observatory in just 37 seconds. The expansive views of the sprawling metropolis and the mountains beyond are stunning. The 101st floor is open to the public, and if you're brave enough you can walk outside on the gangway surrounding the building.

Xindian River

Riding the Xindian bike paths is a pleasant journey. Start from the scenic area of **Bitan**, right beside MRT Xindian Station. Swan-shaped pedal boats are one of the more popular features at Bitan, along with an 83-year-old suspension bridge that provides lovely views of the area and the beauty of the surrounding hills.

From there, it's an enjoyable ride north along the river, passing by high-rise residential areas, through verdant riverside parks, and by modernistic bridges, making for an ideal escape from the congestion and noise of the city.

The route passes by **Treasure Hill**, a one-time illegal squatter settlement that has been turned into an artist village well worth exploring. Nearby is the **Gongguan** night market and commercial district, the **Museum of Drinking Water**, and the **Gongguan Waterfront Plaza**, where you can take a break at an outdoor shipping-container bar and eatery area.



Taipei 101



Treasure Hill

Biking Tips



Public Bike Rental Systems in Taiwan

Renting a YouBike public bike



Public Bike Rental Systems in Taiwan

With a terrific combination of shared-bike systems and dedicated bikeways available in cities in its north and along its west coast, Taiwan has become an urban cyclist's paradise. With over 2,000 automated bicycle-share stations spread across 12 municipalities and counties in Taiwan's north and along its western coast, as well as on the offshore islands of Kinmen, getting around town and launching impromptu urban-cycling adventures has never been easier.

YouBike was launched in Taipei City's modern Xinyi District with just 11 stations and 500 bikes as a trial program in 2009. After a slow start, the service was expanded quickly along Taipei Metro (MRT) lines, while fares were adjusted and registration options expanded. The bikes have become immensely popular over the years, providing a green and healthy option for commuters and opening up new travel possibilities for visitors.

YouBike took over New Taipei City's Newbike system in 2014, and expanded to Taoyuan City in 2016. Conveniently located near public transport stations as well as in commercial districts and near public spaces and popular sights, YouBike has continued to push south, reaching the cities/counties of Hsinchu, Miaoli, Taichung, Changhua, and Kaohsiung.



T-Bike station in Tainan

Tainan, Pingtung City, and Kinmen operate their own systems, **T-Bike**, **Pbike**, and **K-Bike**, respectively.

Except for Pbike, which only accepts the **iPass** card, all of Taiwan's bike-share systems accept payment by the **EasyCard**. Both types of card can be used for pretty much all public transport, and are available at any chain convenience store. The systems also accept credit cards for one-time rentals, but if you're staying more than a few days in Taiwan it's definitely advisable to purchase an EasyCard, as the card also serves as an electronic wallet.

The rental systems are quite similar – registration is completed at kiosks at each station, upon which the user can start renting bikes after a short wait. Online registration is also available, as well as the use of smartphone apps. Rental procedures vary slightly between systems, but mostly involve placing one's card on a reader at a dock or kiosk or on the bike.

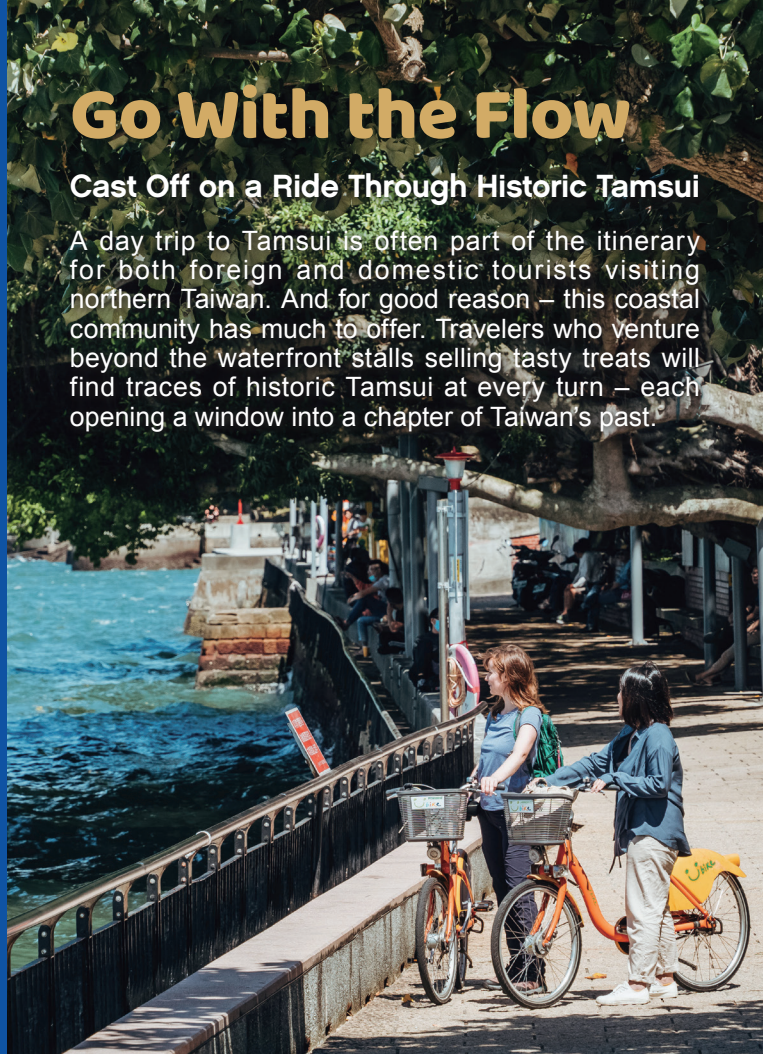


Using an EasyCard to rent a bike

Go With the Flow

Cast Off on a Ride Through Historic Tamsui

A day trip to Tamsui is often part of the itinerary for both foreign and domestic tourists visiting northern Taiwan. And for good reason – this coastal community has much to offer. Travelers who venture beyond the waterfront stalls selling tasty treats will find traces of historic Tamsui at every turn – each opening a window into a chapter of Taiwan's past.



Biking in Tamsui

Situated on the right bank at the mouth of the Tamsui River, modern-day Tamsui has carved out a niche for itself as a weekend seaside town to which Taipei's families come to rinse off the stresses of city living. The port town's fortunes have risen and dipped with the changing geopolitical and economic currents of the day. It has been a long time since ships bound for foreign shores moored here, but the centuries of maritime trade have left their mark on this seaward community in the form of architecture, infrastructure, and even battle scars. Exploring these remnants could not be easier – simply ride the Tamsui-Xinyi Line of the Taipei Metro (MRT) to its northern terminal station, then head to the nearby YouBike public rental-bike station to get started.



Waterfront promenade

Going on a Bike Ride

Stepping out of MRT Tamsui Station on a warm midweek morning, I found myself caught up amongst the tide of locals making the most of the pleasant weather. One group was practicing coordinated aerobics, another salsa dancing. Benches along the whole length of the riverside esplanade section here were occupied by retirees staring out across the Tamsui River.

Our plan was to meander along the waterfront promenade and through the narrow lanes adjacent, stopping at spots of cultural and historic interest, before setting course north for Tamsui Fisherman's Wharf, located right where river meets sea.

It's an easy 4.5km from Tamsui station to the wharf, but with all of our diversions and dallings, the journey took the better part of five hours. Even at this unhurried pace, I felt there was much that we had skimmed over.



Douglas Lapraik & Co.

Cultural Spaces in the Tamsui Old Street Area

As one of the top Western trading companies of its day, **Douglas Lapraik & Co.** was both beneficiary and driver of Tamsui's growing prosperity during the 1800s. Located on Zhongzheng Road just a few minutes from the MRT station, the company's old warehouse is now home to a permanent exhibition detailing the factors that precipitated and resulted from the Sino-French War of the mid-1880s. This potentially dry subject has been deftly dealt with – interactive installations intersperse historical facts with personal accounts, all presented with excellent bilingual texts – leaving me far more informed than when I had arrived.

Just next door is a relatively recent addition to the cultural landscape of Tamsui: the **Chi Po-lin Space**. Occupying a renovated historic building, this gallery is dedicated to preserving, sharing, and perpetuating the work of celebrated aerial photographer and documentary maker Chi Po-lin. Chi, who died in a helicopter crash in 2017, was a civil servant turned filmmaker best known for *Beyond Beauty: Taiwan from Above*. This heartbreakingly beautiful film was shot entirely from the skies, and is a biting polemic against the misuse and abuse done to the land by us humans, its reckless custodians.



Chi Po-lin Space

Historic Residences

Best accessed on foot, the **Former Residence of Tada Eikichi** sits on a narrow wedge of land slightly inland and uphill. It's an elegant 1930s traditional Japanese wood-built structure constructed at the behest of businessman Tada Eikichi, a merchant who arrived on Taiwan's shores as part of the wave of entrepreneurial sorts settling here in the early years of Japanese rule (1895~1945).

Follow the lane that curves snugly along the rear of the Tada Eikichi house for 150m and you'll arrive at the entrance of the **Little White House**. If the Tada Eikichi residence is the epitome of Japanese grace and simplicity, then the Little White House is its European cousin, a stately colonial-style work of architecture. Built in 1870 as accommodation for the Tamsui Port customs officer, the Little White House's understated ivory arches, trimmed lawn, and topiaried hedges exude a distinctly British flavor.



Former Residence of Tada Eikichi



Little White House



House of the Maidens



Little White House

Mackay-Related Sites

No trip to Tamsui would be complete without crossing paths with the late Reverend Mackay. Dr. George Leslie Mackay was an unconventional Canadian missionary who – through services in education, medicine, and religion – earned the moniker “son-in-law of Taiwan.” His legacy casts ripples throughout Taiwan to this day, and what better place to encounter him than **Aletheia University** – the direct descendant of an educational institute he founded more than a century ago. When it opened in 1882 the establishment was named **Oxford College**.

The campus spans both sides of Zhenli Street, with the original classroom facilities to the north and residential buildings to the south. Of note in the northern section is the historic Oxford College building, whilst the southern buildings include the twin red-brick **House of the Reverends** and **House of the Maidens**. Both built in 1906, the former served as the residence for various pastors who taught and preached here over the years, and its neighbor housed the female missionaries who taught at Tamsui Girls' School.

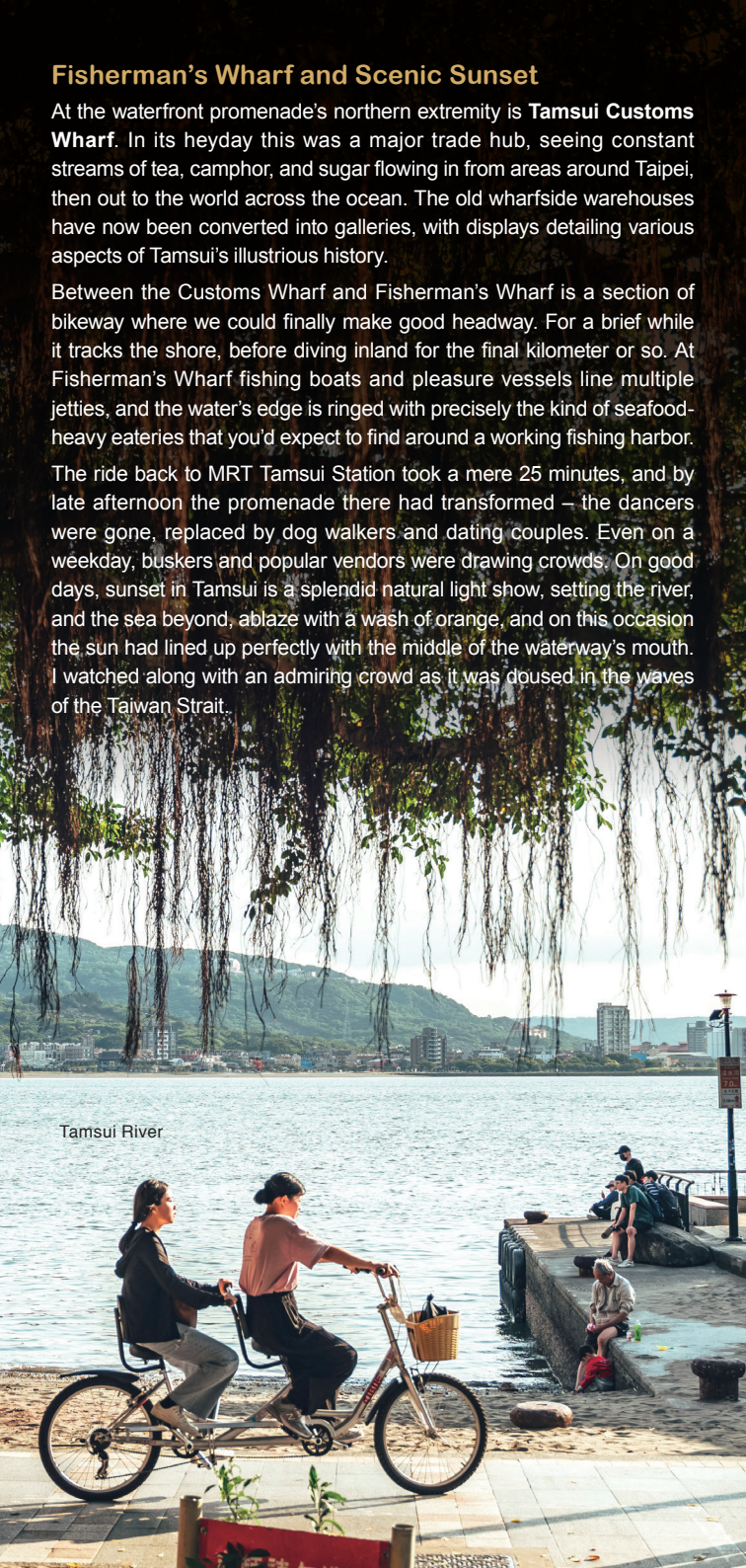
Fisherman's Wharf and Scenic Sunset

At the waterfront promenade's northern extremity is **Tamsui Customs Wharf**. In its heyday this was a major trade hub, seeing constant streams of tea, camphor, and sugar flowing in from areas around Taipei, then out to the world across the ocean. The old wharfside warehouses have now been converted into galleries, with displays detailing various aspects of Tamsui's illustrious history.

Between the Customs Wharf and Fisherman's Wharf is a section of bikeway where we could finally make good headway. For a brief while it tracks the shore, before diving inland for the final kilometer or so. At Fisherman's Wharf fishing boats and pleasure vessels line multiple jetties, and the water's edge is ringed with precisely the kind of seafood-heavy eateries that you'd expect to find around a working fishing harbor.

The ride back to MRT Tamsui Station took a mere 25 minutes, and by late afternoon the promenade there had transformed – the dancers were gone, replaced by dog walkers and dating couples. Even on a weekday, buskers and popular vendors were drawing crowds. On good days, sunset in Tamsui is a splendid natural light show, setting the river, and the sea beyond, ablaze with a wash of orange, and on this occasion the sun had lined up perfectly with the middle of the waterway's mouth. I watched along with an admiring crowd as it was doused in the waves of the Taiwan Strait.

Tamsui River



Biking Tips



YouBike Q+ A

What is the difference between the orange and the white bikes?

In Taipei City you will see two types of YouBikes, orange ones (version 1.0) and predominantly white ones (version 2.0). The city introduced a new generation of bikes with version 2.0 a few years ago, but unfortunately the old and the new bikes are docked at different stations, meaning the bikes of one version cannot be returned at a station of the other. The new-version bikes and docking stations were introduced in the New Taipei City area in November 2021. Therefore, before renting one of the white bicycles, make sure there is a suitable station available in the area where you intend to return the bike.



Can I return the bike in another city?

YouBikes are meant for short rides within a city, and each bike is the property of one city. This means that bikes that are moved across city borders need to be returned to their "home city" eventually by the YouBike company. However, since Taipei City, New Taipei City, and Taoyuan City are in such close proximity to each other, renting and returning is allowed across these cities' borders.



YouBike Version 1 docking station

What if I lock my bike and lose the key?

Each YouBike comes with a front-wheel lock chain and key. If you need to step away from your bicycle, you can lock the bike and take the key with you. Should you lose the key, the first thing you want to do is call 1999 and ask for help/instructions. Apart from paying for the key (NT\$200), you'll also have to pay for the transportation of the bike to a YouBike service center.

Can I ride on sidewalks/in pedestrian areas?

You are only allowed to ride a bike on sidewalks and in pedestrian areas that are clearly marked as designed for bike + pedestrian usage. Pedestrians always have the right of way, even on clearly marked bikeways.

Do I have to wear a helmet?

It is not mandatory to wear a helmet while riding a bicycle in Taiwan, but it's certainly recommended to wear one as protection in case you have an accident.

Can I switch bikes at a station?

You can switch bikes at a docking station, but you have to wait 15 minutes between returning a bike and renting a new one.



YouBike bike rental

Along the Dahan River

A Bike Ride Connecting the Towns of Yingge and Daxi

If you like the idea of riding a bicycle in Taipei City but worry about the dense traffic in the capital's streets, head to the riverside parks. The city has established an excellent network of well-paved dedicated bikeways along all its main rivers.



Riding from Yingge to Daxi

Starting in Yingge

There are two must-visit tourist attractions in Yingge, the **Old Street** area and the **New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum**. In the Old Street area you'll find a cluster of shops selling pottery items that make great souvenirs, such as teapots and ceramic cups. The modern museum has displays of fine pieces of ceramics art.

From Yingge Railway Station, it's just a 15min walk or a short ride (if you've brought your own bike) to the **Sanying Art Village**. The "village" is a park with ceramics-themed art installations perfect for taking selfies. The centerpiece is a 15m-tall reddish-brown leaning tower that looks a bit like what you'd expect to see on the potter's wheel of someone who tries pottery for the first time. If you haven't brought your own bike, there is a **YouBike** docking station in the park, right beside the **Yingge Civil Sports Center**.



Sanying Longyao Bridge



Before starting your journey southwest along the Dahan you'll first have to cross the 85m-long **Sanying Longyao Bridge**, which spans the small Yingge River. This stylish structure was designed to resemble a "dragon kiln" (*longyao*), a large elongated kiln traditionally used in commercial pottery making.

After leaving the bridge behind, for a short stretch you'll be following Huanhe Road before turning left

and entering the **Nanjing Ceramics Riverside Park**. This is one of the most pleasant sections of the route down to Daxi, with many lush trees providing shade.

After reaching the southern end of the ceramics park you'll pass under a National Freeway 3 bridge and then will soon come close to a large dam spanning the river, the **Yuanshan Weir**. Built in 1983 and operated by the Taiwan Water Corporation, this weir is used to catch water released by the Shimen Reservoir, about 19km upstream, for diversion to the Banxin Water Treatment Plant.





Down in Daxi

After entering Taoyuan City's Daxi District, you'll be riding through large open spaces. There is a strong rural countryside feel, with rice paddies and vegetable fields along the way.

Next up is another large manmade body of water, the **Zhongzhuang Retention Basin**. Built in 2013, this basin is used for storing clean water needed as backup in case the water inside the Shimen Reservoir becomes too turbid during/after typhoons because of heavy rainfall. Shooting out over the water at the basin's southern end is a small glass-bottom lookout platform, which has become a popular photo-taking spot.

After passing through a riverside area lush with shrubs and bushes, you'll arrive at the **Daxi Riverside Park**. Separated from the river by a massive dike, this is a fun place for children, complete with playground areas and a baseball field.

Next you'll come to a Provincial Highway 3 bridge that spans the river. While you could ride across this bridge to reach central Daxi town, you'll certainly prefer to go on for another few hundred meters or so and take the much prettier pedestrian **Daxi Bridge** instead. Built in 1934, this is a beautiful suspension bridge adorned with Baroque-style elements.



Houses in the Daxi Old Street area

At the far end of the bridge, take the steep stairs uphill (or the elevator), which will deliver you right inside old **Zhongzheng Park**. During the 1895~1945 Japanese colonial era, this park was the site of Daxi's Shinto Shrine. While the shrine is long gone, you can still find numerous stones with inscriptions from the colonial days inside the park and, added more recently, Japanese-style stone lanterns and even an outdoor Sumo dohyō (wrestling ring).

If you have an interest in history, just to the south of the park is one of the many residences used by late R.O.C. President

Chiang Kai-shek during his time in Taiwan. The residence's two main buildings are now part of an interesting museum project in Daxi called the **Daxi Wood Art Ecomuseum** (*wem.tycg.gov.tw*). Informative exhibitions about wood art can be visited in a number of heritage buildings in different locations around town.

The town's main attraction is its **Old Street** area, at the heart of which is Heping Road, a narrow street lined with old shophouses sporting beautiful façades. Look up and you will see a mix of Western-inspired Baroque-style and traditional southern Fujianese architectural elements, such as intricate carvings of birds and bats.

The town's specialty is dried tofu, especially the "black dried beancurd" variety. There are numerous shops and eateries to choose from. Have a dried-tofu lunch and remember to buy a bag or two for the road or for friends and family back home.



Zhongzhuang Retention Basin

Biking Tips



How to Take a Bicycle on a Railway Train

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 your bike so that it fits in a suitable bicycle bag, 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.



Please read the instructions before mounting your bike



Bicycles in a Local Train car

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. 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.

Best Area 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.





Riding along the After Bay of Shimen Reservoir

Stone Gate Reservoir

One of the Best Tourist Attractions in Taoyuan

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.

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.



Dam of Shimen Reservoir



Large metal fence sections in Nanyuan Eco Park

Below the Dam

Riding a bicycle around Shimen Reservoir is a popular activity for day-trippers. 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 or app.

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, 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.

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



Water pipe section

floating wood in the reservoir and a giant section of water pipe that was part of the dam's power plant.

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.

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**.

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, and grass carp, prepared in a variety of ways.

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, on one side you can 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.

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.

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** and there are numerous cafés along the way where you can stop for a rest.

Riding across the dam



Biking Tips



Shuangwan Bikeway on Taiwan's North Coast



Things to Consider Before Circling Taiwan

Circling the island on a bicycle is a feat accomplished by many dedicated cyclists these days. Some find it easy, some find it challenging. Depending on your level of fitness and your desired level of comfort during the ride, the way to approach it might vary significantly.

Which Way Around?

Most riders who plan to start in Taipei will consider riding counter-clockwise. There are good reasons for this. The western half of the island is mostly flat, giving less-experienced riders a few days of easy riding to get used to traveling a long distance each day. Many will also opt for the west side first to keep the more scenic east side for the latter stages.

What Is the Best Season?

The main concern for many riders is the heat and the rain. Autumn, a time when the high temperatures of the summer have given way to much more pleasant ones, is generally considered the best season for outdoor activities including cycling. Summer can be very hot, especially in the south, so staying hydrated and sun-protected is key. Since there is also the chance of typhoons sweeping across the island in late summer through early autumn, cyclists should always keep a close eye on the weather forecast.

Where to Find Help?

Many chain convenience stores and all police stations along the way offer basic services for cyclists. You also want to map out Giant and Merida service-stop locations along your route.

What Bike to Ride?

If you plan to purchase or rent a bike for this trip, consulting bike shops catering to round-the-island riders is highly recommended. The bike will be your best friend for around two weeks, and you want to make sure that it fits your personal requirements well to minimize discomfort and avoid injuries.

Cycling Route No. 1

Visit www.taiwanon2wheels.com to find a helpful sample itinerary of a round-the-island bicycling trip following Cycling Route No. 1. Time for completion is 12 days, at an average speed of 20km/h and riding around 100km a day.

Bikeway at Sun Moon Lake



A Day in Daya

Exploring a Quiet Corner of Semi-Rural Taichung on Two Wheels

Cutting through three districts in semi-rural northwestern Taichung, the Tanyashen Green Bikeway is one of numerous new rail trails that have proliferated throughout Taiwan in the past decade or so. Its 14km length holds much to pique the interest of visiting cyclists – from flamboyant seasonal-flower displays to scenic photo spots.



Cycling the Tanyashen Green Bikeway

In recent years an ambitious plan to create a nationwide cycling web has seen a multitude of bikeways constructed across the length and breadth of Taiwan. One feature many of these routes share is that they adhere to lines cleaved by decommissioned railways.

You could say Taichung is something of a trendsetter in this drive to promote two-wheeled transport. It lays claim to having created Taiwan's first rail trail (Dongfeng Bicycle Green Way), and although the Tanyashen Green Bikeway was only the city's second designated cycle route when it opened in 2004, various other trails have since been added to the network.

Tanyashen Green Bikeway

The Tanyashen Green Bikeway straddles three semi-urban districts to the northwest of Taichung's urban core, starting close to Tanzi Station, cutting through Shengang District, and finishing in Daya District. The 12km route follows the decommissioned Shengang Line – a military freight line which was operational from 1957 to 1999.

Getting started is straightforward – bike-rental stores and three YouBike public bike-rental stations can be found close to the bikeway. If you're bringing kids along, the rental stores are the most practical option since they charge by the day and offer a range of children's bikes and baby seats. You can rent bikes from the **Songmeng Bike Rental Store**, which is located next to **Chariot Park** (aka Tank Park) close to the western end of the route in Daya. This park is one of numerous places where the district's military connections are on display.



Zunqian Ren'ai Park

Children's playground in the Zunqian Ren'ai Park



Tanks in the Chariot Park

From the park we rode northwards under hazy pastel skies in search of some of the scenic spots that the Tanyashen Green Bikeway is known for. Off both sides of the trail is a mix of small-scale agriculture and light industry, coupled with clusters of residential buildings, parks, coffee shops, and a smattering of temples. Soon we were cruising over smooth asphalt through a green tunnel of Taiwanese rain trees. In early March they are covered in recently spouted new growth, but in October their branches will be weighed down with abundant coral-pink flowers. Indeed, floral displays are one of the main attractions along the way, with each season offering a different palette of colors. On our visit we saw stands of golden trumpet trees, branches brandishing giant pom-poms of yellow blossoms, and meadows of delicate floss flower abuzz with hundreds of garden white butterflies.

Knowing that the cycle route used to be a military railway, I had fun spotting vestiges of its previous life. In places the old track has been incorporated into the bikeway, station platforms have been repurposed as rest stops, and an old water tower has been maintained, with the addition of several pumps outside. Elsewhere I noticed a sentry box, an F-5E fighter jet, and a myriad of modern additions paying homage to the area's military history. However, the award for most creative take on the theme goes to **Zunqian Ren'ai Park**, which has plane motifs everywhere and a sandpit built into a curved wall styled like a bunker.



Dongfeng Bicycle Green Way

Dongfeng Bicycle Green Way

The **Dongfeng Bicycle Green Way** stretches for 12.4 kilometers through leafy, gently undulating avenues from Dongshi District in the east to Fengyuan District in the west, running parallel to the Dajia River. The bikeway follows what was once the route of the Dongshi Line, a railway built in 1958 to transport timber from the rich cypress, cedar, and fir forests of Dongshi to the town of Fengyuan. The railway line was decommissioned in 1991. The bikeway, following the original line, was opened in 2000; this was Taiwan's first railway-to-bikeway conversion.

Zooming along the well-kept asphalt under a cooling canopy of tree branches, you'll pass several of the decommissioned stations, now renovated and transformed into pleasant rest stops, and other relics of the old railway.

One of the most charming attractions along the bikeway, the **Lovers' Bridge**, requires a slight detour from the main path over an imposing steel overpass adorned with bas-relief scenes from the Garden of Eden. The Lovers' Bridge itself is a quaint wooden structure that crosses a tributary of the Dajia River and brings you to a romantic small plaza and park, lovingly landscaped with flowers, lemon trees, and heart-shaped sculptures draped in wisteria.



National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts

Central Taichung

Grab a YouBike in front of the **National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts** in central Taichung and head down the **Art Museum Parkway**, a refreshing green corridor in the middle of the city lined with restaurants, galleries, bookstores, and boutiques. The brick path winding through the middle of the parkway takes pedestrians and cyclists past a series of large-scale public artworks.

After returning your bike, wind down at one of the parkway's many eateries offering global dining options, which range from Taiwanese and indigenous cuisine to Greek, Indian, French, and Thai. Of course, don't forget to check out the art museum itself, which is one of the largest of its kind in Asia. It boasts an outdoor sculpture garden and features mostly modern and contemporary pieces by Taiwanese artists.

You can continue cycling on to the adjacent **Calligraphy Greenway** and beyond, all the way to the **National Museum of Natural Science** with plenty of sights to keep you busy along the way.



Biking in central Taichung City



Gaomei Wetland

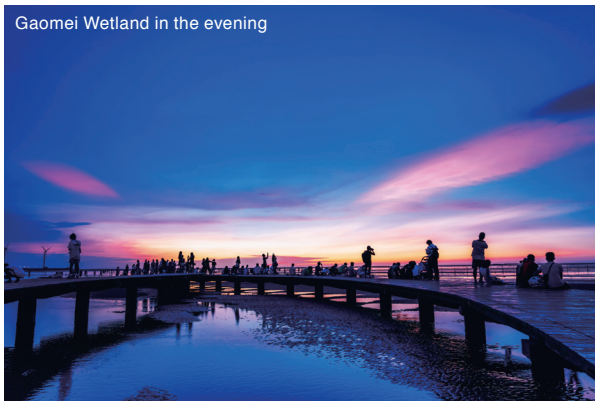
Gaomei Wetland

The Gaomei Wetland is in Taichung's **Qingshui District**, on the south side of the point where the Dajia River empties into the Taiwan Strait. It is 300ha in area, with a seawall stretching 3.5km that is very popular with cyclists. On the mainland side of the wall is a cluster of tourist-focused businesses, notably food sellers, where bike-rental operations are found.

At the wetland's south end is a new, large visitor center with exhibits on wetland topics. Gaomei is a sanctuary for birdlife, and an important stopover point for migratory birds. The center's rooftop provides expansive views in all directions.

Also on the south edge is a pretty biker/pedestrian-only bridge that jumps a stream to bring you over to a giant line of wind turbines that makes for striking photos. Directly in front of the aforementioned tourist-business cluster is an 800m boardwalk that brings you far out into the wetland, just a few feet above the teeming world of busy fiddler crabs, mudskippers, and other tiny local denizens.

Gaomei Wetland in the evening



Ershui and Tianzhong in Changhua County

If you're looking for a bike route in central Taiwan that can be easily reached by train, head to the town of Ershui in the southeast corner of Changhua County. Close to the Ershui Railway Station you can rent bikes and then ride along the Ershui Bikeway, which follows the Jiji Branch Railway Line. Among the sights to see are two old steam locomotives on display just to the northwest of the railway station. The easy-to-follow bike route, consisting of dedicated bike-path sections and minor roads, is mostly flat. You'll pass rice paddies, flower fields, and fruit orchards, the tiny Yuanquan Railway Station, the Ershui Formosan Macaque Education Exhibition Hall, and the Babaozun, a major irrigation channel serving farmers in Changhua. If you want to exert yourself you can ride all the way to the town of Jiji (about 20km from Ershui), passing Zhuoshui town. Jiji is a popular tourist town, and the best scenic attraction for cyclists here is a stretch of County Road 152, west of town, where the canopy formed by the beautiful trees on the road's two sides creates what is locally known as a "green tunnel."

One railway stop northwest of Ershui is Tianzhong, another fine location for going on uplifting bicycle jaunts through the rural countryside of Changhua.



Jiji Branch Railway Line



Ershui Bikeway

Sun Moon Lake in Nantou County

Picture-perfect Sun Moon Lake, nestled in the foothills of Taiwan's Central Mountain Range, high peaks looking down into the lake basin on the east, is one of the prettiest of the island's bursting treasure vault of tourist mountain getaway destinations. Your range of experiences from which to choose is highly varied. The cycling route around the lake is one of the best in Taiwan.

Bicycles can be rented in Shuishe village in the northwest corner of the lake, at the Xiangshan Visitor Center, half-way down the west side, and at Ita Thao Village, in the southeast. The lake-circling route has a length of about 30km. It is part dedicated bikeway (often right at the lake's edge) and part highway, with some hilly stretches on the east side. If you're looking for just a relaxed ride along the lake, following the bike path on the west bank of the lake is recommended.



Sun Moon Lake



Bikeway bridge at Sun Moon Lake

Riding in the Harbor City

Easy Bicycle Routes in Kaohsiung

Bicycling is a great way to explore a city. Kaohsiung, in southern Taiwan, has a number of bike routes ideal for relaxed exploration tours. Let's hop on a bike and pedal about on perambulations through this harbor city!

Having fun cycling in
Kaohsiung



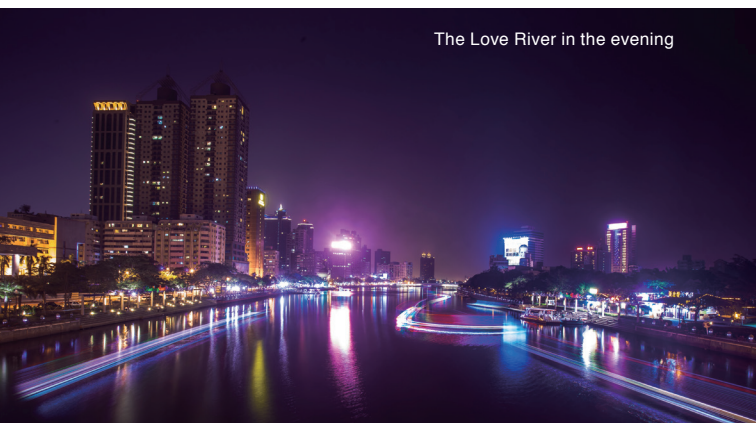
Kaohsiung has some highly favorable conditions for bike outings. For most of the year the weather is perfect for cycling jaunts, with low chances of rain. The city is also mostly flat, there is a growing network of dedicated bikeways, main roads are wide with relative low traffic density, and there are quite a few scenic and cultural attractions easily reached on bikes from points throughout the city core.

The harbor is Kaohsiung's dominant feature, and riding along the city's bodies of water, including the harbor, the sea, its main river, and a pretty "pond" that is in truth a lake, is the best way to see many of the city's top attractions. Two routes are especially recommended: Qijin Island and Love River, both easy to follow, with many interesting sights to be found along the way.

Love River

The Love River is one of the best known of Kaohsiung's many tourist attractions. The slow-flowing waterway, in the 1960s and '70s resembling a smelly sewer more than a river, underwent a decades-long clean-up that lasted until the late 1990s. Since then it has become the venue for the city's annual Lantern Festival celebrations and exciting dragon-boat races. During the late afternoon and evening, people come to the river to go on long walks, fun cruises on the river, and rides on the riverside bike paths.

Between **Kaohsiung Bridge**, close to the harbor, and **Bo'ai Bridge**, about 6km to the northeast, there are over a dozen YouBike rental stations close to the river, making it easy to start and end a riverside bike ride at locations convenient for you. A good place to begin is at the **LRT (Light Rail) Love Pier Station**, close to where the river enters Kaohsiung Harbor. From there you can follow the left bank of the river all the way north to Bo'ai Bridge, then return south on the right bank. Places of interest you will come across along the way include the Kaohsiung Film Archive, Kaohsiung 228 Peace Memorial Park, Kaohsiung Museum of History, Heart of Love River park, Tower of Light, and Zhongdu Wetlands Park.



The Love River in the evening

Kaohsiung Lighthouse on Qijin Island



Qijin Island

Qijin Island is a long (8.5km) and narrow strip of land that acts as a natural buffer between the waters of the Taiwan Strait and Kaohsiung Harbor. The most common way to get to the island is by taking the ferry from the **Gushan Ferry Terminal**, which takes less than 10 minutes.

After arriving at the ferry terminal on the island, you won't have trouble finding bike-rental operations renting out different types of vehicles. Start your ride by the ferry terminal and head north to the island's northern tip. There, you can have a look at the northern entrance of Kaohsiung Harbor, with a high probability of seeing big vessels entering and exiting through the narrow mouth. On top of a 48m-high coral-rock hillock (Mt. Qihou) there, you'll also spot the picturesque **Kaohsiung Lighthouse**. After rounding the island's northern end, head south and you'll soon enter a long, narrow tunnel, the Qijin Star Tunnel, which has a beautifully lit ceiling with sparkling stars.

After emerging from the tunnel, you'll soon find yourself riding along a long dark-sand beach. There are number of interesting installation-art objects to see here, including the Rainbow Church, a giant seashell (Qijin Sea Pearl), and windmills inside the Qijin Windmill Park. The southern part of the island mostly consists of industrial areas, and unless you have a deep interest in container storage facilities you want to end your southbound venturing upon reaching Fuxing Temple and start your ride back up north.

The Star of Qianzhen Bikeway

The **Star of Qianzhen** bike bridge is not only one of the best places to watch the Kaohsiung skyline at night; the curvy, organically-designed structure itself becomes a stunning illuminated sculpture that's magical to ride through. The bridge connects three major bike paths, and also connects to Kaohsiung's light rail system as well as to a KMRT station.

From the bridge, follow Kaisyuan Road southwest to reach the **Dream Mall**, the largest shopping mall in Taiwan and home to the **Eye of Kaohsiung** Ferris wheel. From there, you can continue on the 6km-long **West Harbor Line Bike Path**, which takes you toward **The Pier 2 Art Center** and other attractions.

Head northeast and you'll arrive at the **Kaisyuan and Jinzuan night markets**, which combine to make the largest night market in Taiwan. Follow the Qianzhen Canal southeast and you'll come to the **Taroko Park**, a mall and a fun-filled theme park.

Lotus Pond

The cycling path around Lotus Pond is a bit more than 3km long, and you can circle this pretty body of water in less than half an hour. If riding counter-clockwise around the pond starting in the southeast corner you'll first come to the Zhouzi Wetland Park (great for waterbird watching), then to Kaohsiung Confucius Temple (largest Confucius temple in Taiwan), then to the Zuoying Yuandi Temple (best known for a large statue of Xuanwu, a Daoist deity), then the Spring and Autumn Pavilions (a pair of octagonal 4-story pagodas built over the pond), and finally the Dragon and Tiger Pagodas (two 7-story structures you can enter by walking through a dragon and a tiger, respectively).



The Star of Qianzhen bike bridge



Dragon and Tiger Pagodas at Lotus Pond

Tainan

Explore the heart of Tainan on the 11.9km **Meili Park Bikeway**, a loop that circles most of the major sights in the urban core not far from the train station. T-Bike stations are dotted across the area. The loop passes through several large green spaces, including the city's oldest and largest park, **Tainan Park**, which was built in 1917. Just north of the train station, this is a great place to relax and enjoy nature as well as explore historical relics.

You'll pass by the heritage-rich **Shennong Street**, which is bursting with creativity with artists and designers opening shop in refurbished 100-year-old houses. Grab a bite or some coffee here, soak up the atmosphere, and maybe plan to return for a drink later at one of the funky bars. The 88-year-old **Hayashi Department Store** is worth a brief stop before visiting the nearby **Confucius Temple**, which was built in 1666 and was the first of its kind in Taiwan. The complex contains over a dozen buildings, including the school known as **Taiwan's First Academy**. A short walk away is the **Koxinga Shrine**, which is dedicated to the Ming Dynasty loyalist who expelled the Dutch from Taiwan in 1662.



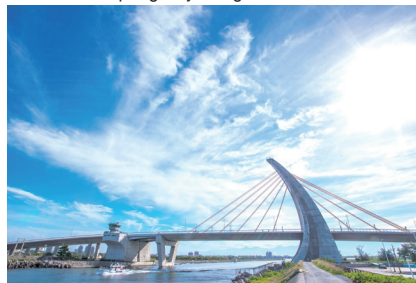
Confucius Temple in Tainan



Koxinga Shrine

Tainan Park

Dapeng Bay Bridge



Riding around Dapeng Bay



Eco park at Dapeng Bay

Pingtung

Over the past few years the Pingtung County government has developed a comprehensive web of integrated bikeway systems highlighting the county's culture and scenery, dubbing it the "**Pingtung Rainbow Bicycle Network**." It currently totals more than 460km in length. The "rainbow" in the title refers to the use of color coding for the separate bikeway systems.

Two elements of Pingtung culture especially interesting are the indigenous and Hakka communities. The former are primarily explored on the mountain routes. For the latter, specially recommended is the flatland **Changzhi-Linluo Bikeway**. The starting (and return point) is the Pingtung Railway Station, with the main places visited along the way on this farm-country jaunt the **Linluo Wetlands Park**, **Pingtung Sports Park**, and **Liudui Hakka Cultural Park**.

Another excellent location for relaxed bike rides is the **Dapeng Bay National Scenic Area**. You can rent bikes close to the area's visitor center and then follow the 12km bikeway around the bay – Taiwan's largest lagoon – passing through/by/over such attractions as the Qifeng Wetlands, Dapeng Bay Coastal Park, and Dapeng Bay Bridge.

Valley or Coast? Or Both?

How to Do Scenery-Rich
Eastern Taiwan on Two Wheels

Among the many popular areas for bicycling around Taiwan, the East Rift Valley and the East Coast most certainly make a bicyclist's heart beat faster, both in terms of pre-visit anticipation and on-the-ground excitement.



Cycling in the East Rift Valley near Yuli

Realizing the dream of circling the island of Taiwan using a bicycle is high on the list of local and foreign cycling enthusiasts. Many opt for the well-marked and easy-to-follow **Cycling Route No. 1**, most completing the ride in less than two weeks.

If you don't want to circle the whole island, and would rather focus on those parts especially rich in terms of pristine environment and mountain/ocean scenery, spend some time in the marvelous eastern region of Taiwan.

In east Taiwan, there is the **Coastal Mountain Range** along the coast and the **East Rift Valley** on the west side of the range. Two highways connect Hualien and Taitung cities; Provincial Highway No. 9 (through the valley) and No. 11 (hugging the coast). There are a few minor roads

connecting the two and there is also **County Road No. 193**, which runs parallel to the 9 in the Hualien part of the valley.

You have quite a few options when it comes to route planning. Ride, for example, the whole length of the valley and then back along the coast, cycle exclusively in the valley or along the coast (or combine the two areas by taking one of the connecting roads), or follow the 193, which has less traffic and more shade trees.

The valley is more convenient in terms of public transport thanks to the trunk railway line that runs its length. If you plan to only cycle parts of the valley, you can easily move about, taking your bike onto local trains. You can also rent bikes near the starting point of some of the well-known dedicated bikeways, for example at **Yuli** in Hualien and **Chishang** in Taitung.

Yufu Bikeway

This is a very popular bikeway built on the railbed of a decommissioned railway line. The bikeway starts close to Yuli Railway Station, where you'll find bike-rental shops.

The bikeway starts about 300m south of the railway station. After briefly riding parallel to the main railway line, you'll soon turn southeast, following the original path trains would take in the past. Two kilometers from the railway station you'll arrive at a long, straight bridge that crosses the **Xiuguluan River**. After crossing about two-thirds of the bridge there's a point indicating the fault line that runs by directly below, dividing the Eurasian Plate and the Philippine Sea Plate. The ongoing tectonic movements of these plates put a constant strain on the railway bridge, and in 1989 it was decided to re-route the railway line, keeping it on the western side of the river.

The Yufu Bikeway is a very enjoyable ride through the enchanting East Rift Valley countryside, past rice paddies and rapeseed fields. The Yufu Bikeway ends at the former station of **Dongli**, a great spot to take a rest (there is a café inside the former station building) before starting the return leg to Yuli.



Bridge across the Xiuguluan River near Yuli town



Tropic of Cancer marker at Wuhe Plateau in Hualien County

Solitary tree on Bolang Dadao



Riding a bike along Chishang's rice fields



Chishang/Guanshan

Two of the busiest dedicated bikeways in the East Rift Valley are centered on the towns of Chishang and Guanshan, located close to each other. Both are long loop routes, that take you through colorful paddy field, rapeseed field, and fruit orchard tapestries interlaced with networks of gurgling-water irrigation channels, and to many sites of historical and/or cultural interest. The Guanshan loop has the honor of being the first dedicated bikeway created in Taiwan, and remains among the most beautiful.

Perhaps the most pleasing section of the Guanshan loop is a long, well-shaded run along a gushing-water irrigation canal that runs along the mountainside providing wonderful sweeping views of the town, neat farm plots beyond in all directions, and the Coastal Mountain Range backdrop. The most photographed section of the Chishang loop is **Bolang Dadao** (Brown Avenue), set amidst a sea of paddies, made famous in a Mr. Brown Coffee commercial and EVA Air commercial starring Japanese-Taiwanese pop-idol heartthrob Takeshi Kaneshiro.

Taitung City to Sanxiantai

Taitung is a small city in the southeast with a laid-back vibe and strong indigenous-culture presence. It's the logical starting point for exploring the East Coast from the south. The stretch from the city all the way up to Sanxiantai, a major tourist attraction (about 50km one way), is regarded as especially scenic and attractive. Just to the north of the city you come to the fascinating sandstone rock formations of **Xiaoyeliu** ("Little Yeliu"). Less than 2km further you can make a stop at the **Jialulan** seaside park. This is a great spot for taking a good look at the coast further north, prominently featuring the impressive mountains of the coastal range.

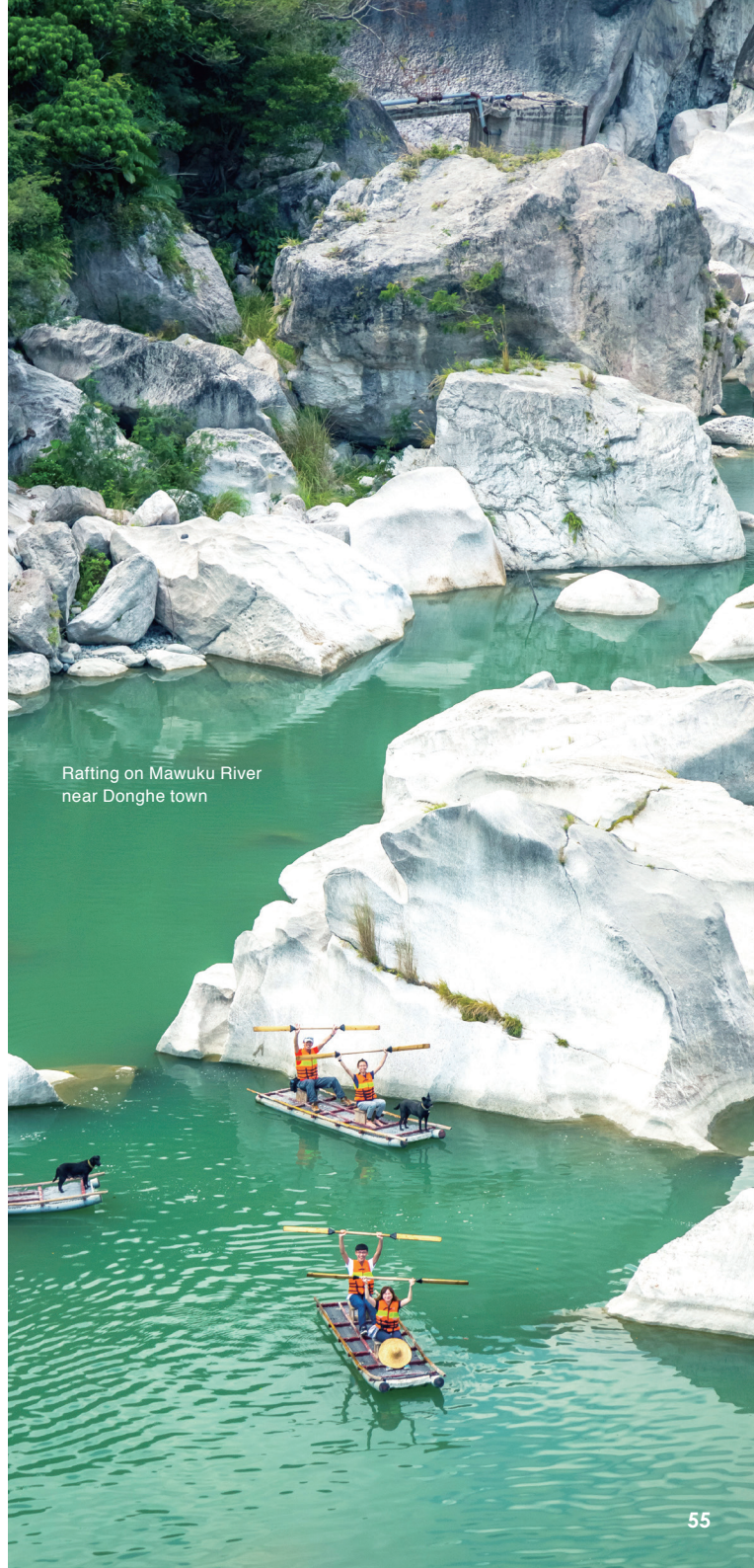
With the highway running close along the shore in this area, you can easily stop at numerous small beaches (sand and pebble) along the way, including **Shanyuan** and **Jiamuzi**. Next comes the village of **Dulan**, which in recent years has become a hotspot for visitors and new residents seeking immersion in the relaxing ways of this small community in close proximity to excellent surf beaches.

The next stop ideal for a rest is the **Jinzun Recreation Area**, where there is a café with outdoor seating, perched on a high point, perfect for taking in the grand Pacific panorama. In the distance you can spot **Jinzun Fishing Harbor**, known as one of Taiwan's best surfing locations. Next up is the village of **Donghe**, where you should try the yummy steamed buns. When crossing the Donghe Bridge just to the north of the village make sure to look left to see the **Donghe Old Bridge** and, beyond the bridge, the huge white boulders scattered in the riverbed of the **Mawuku River**.

Next, check out Chenggong town's fishing harbor for excellent seafood dining. The final highlight of this recommended route is scenic **Sanxiantai**, a small offshore island connected to the mainland by a photogenic multiple-arch pedestrian bridge.



Iconic footbridge to Sanxiantai island



Rafting on Mawuku River near Donghe town



Bike Supply Stations for Cyclists Riding Around Taiwan

Even if you go on a round-Taiwan cycling adventure well-prepared and well-equipped, during your trip you might still run into technical difficulties with your bicycle, and when this happens you will certainly look for a place where you can make a pit stop. That's when the numerous bike supply stations set up along Taiwan's major bike routes come in handy.

If you think of a large, well-staffed service center when hearing the term "bike supply station," you might need to lower your expectations just a little bit. Many of these "stations" are not more than small corners set aside at visitor centers, police stations, gas stations, convenience stores, and other businesses to give cyclists a space to rest and refresh. Many, however, provide pumps and basic tools for fixing minor bike problems, and some provide helpful travel information such as maps and brochures.



Shouka Bicycle Supply Station

Supply stations can be found roughly every 20km along Cycling Route No. 1, the main route around the island, which is about 950km long and takes between 7 and 12 days to complete for average riders. They can also be found along other routes and in popular tourist areas, such as at Sun Moon Lake, and even on some of Taiwan's offshore islands, including Penghu and Green Island.



Tool kits are provided at some bike supply stations

Over the years, various individual bike supply stations have become especially popular among cyclists. One example is the Shouka Tiema Yizhan ("Shouka Bicycle Supply Station"), located at the intersection of Provincial Highway 9E and County Route 199 in Pingtung County. Sitting at the highest point of the highway that connects the west and east coasts in Taiwan's far south, the station has become a must-stop for cyclists on round-the-island excursions. Tired from the long ascent up to this point from any of the three possible directions, riders are eager to get off their steeds here. Inside the small building they will rest, share stories with fellow riders, and leave messages on specially prepared slices of wood (please don't write on the walls of the building!).





Offshore Islands

Basalt rock formations in Penghu

Penghu

The Penghu Islands are a wide-flung archipelago of history-rich islands sitting in the middle of the Taiwan Strait. They lie low to the surrounding waters, with few high points, making them nigh perfect for cycling. Locals describe the collection of 90 islands as “pearls scattered on the turquoise sea.” The long, sleepy roads have little motor-vehicle traffic. The islands are primarily rocky, with massive formations of exposed volcanic basalt columns prominent and seascapes dramatic, and dotted with a number of fine white-sand beaches.

This was a key regional crossroads in the days of sail, including for pirates. The islands are a slow-moving realm of old fishing villages – with a selection of stone-residence villages fully renovated and now major tourist draws – old temples, old lighthouses, and old fort ruins. Small farm plots are protected from the famed winter winds that rush down the strait by low coral walls. The three main islands, connected by bridge, form the outer walls of a comparatively calm inland sea. Sail sports are popular on the water, long and leisurely bike and scooter tours on the land. Boat tours to the outlying islands are also popular, with bike/scooter rental operations set up at docksides.



Pavilion at Fenggui Cave



Zhongyang Old Street



Deyue Tower in Kinmen

Kinmen

Greater Kinmen and Lesser Kinmen are two large Taiwan-controlled islands that are part of a tightly-packed archipelago just off the coast of mainland China's Fujian province. Their nearest point, on Greater Kinmen, is just 1,800m from the China mainland shore – site of the military-manned Mashed Observation Station. With cold war tensions now eased, many military facilities are now retired and open to the public. The countryside is dotted with productive, small farms and imperial-era clan villages featuring distinctive south Fujian architecture.

Cycling is a breeze here. The terrain is comparatively flat, the roads are of excellent quality (built to handle military hardware), population density is low, and locals drive noticeably slowly. The majority of visitors spend most of their time on Greater Kinmen. There is good tree cover and much shade along its routes, especially on and around rocky **Mount Taiwu** (just 253m high). A tourist favorite is the **Wind Lion God** cycling tour. There are 60-plus colorful statues around the islands to protect homes and farm fields from the sometimes strong winds; Wind Lion tour maps are available at Kinmen tourist information centers.



Cycling Events

Come! Bikeday

This is a showcase for the exquisitely beautiful Sun Moon Lake, located in the **Sun Moon Lake National Scenic Area** in the central mountains. The elevation of the mountain-surrounded lake's surface is about 750m.

Come!Bikeday happens over a weekend in late autumn, with different events satisfying the desires of competitive riders, leisure riders, and kids. The center of action is the expansive **Xiangshan Visitor Center**, located on the lake's west side. Among these is the 30km round-lake **Challenge Ride** highway jaunt, for more serious bikers. The start and finish is at the visitor center.

The non-competitive, family-oriented **Joy Ride** is 10km, and features easy grades. You start at the visitor center, head through the main lakeside village (Shuishe), and turn around just past the Zhaowu Pier to return the same way. A long part of this happy big-gathering excursion is along the popular bikeway (for walkers as well) that runs along the lake's west side.

The west-side bikeway is itself one of Sun Moon Lake's most popular attractions, and delivers you to numerous other attractions. The Xiangshan Visitor Center has an info-rich exhibit hall and a fine glass-wall café overlooking a small, quiet bay. Close to it – part of the bikeway – are the poetically lovely **Tongxin Bridge** and **Yongjie Bridge**, known as the “wedding photo bridges.” The **Xiangshan Scenic Outlook** skywalk, also near the center, is reached via a branch boardwalk that seems to float through treetops, high above the aforementioned bay.

Cycling on Sun Moon Lake bikeway





Riders during the challenging KOM race

King of the Mountain (KOM) Event

The Taiwan KOM (King of the Mountain) Challenge is the most exciting and spirit-demanding of the Taiwan Cycling Festival events, and considered the highlight event. The first edition of the Taiwan Cycling Festival was in 2010, the first for this race in 2012. It has become one of the most prestigious and sought-after challenges on international racers' calendars.

Held in late autumn, this is an international race reserved for elite riders that starts in the scenic coastal **Qixingtian** area just north of the small east coast city of Hualien and takes riders through magnificent Taroko National Park. At the park's base just inland from the coast is **Taroko Gorge**, Taiwan's greatest natural wonder, where sheer marble-laced cliffs a thousand meters high almost kiss in places. The race ends far, far uphill along the Central Cross-Island Highway at the **Wuling** pass, Taiwan's highest road point at 3,275 meters. Riders, starting at sea level, cover 105km, with the route featuring many steep and winding sections.

Light Up Taiwan

This series of rides – full name “**Light Up Taiwan 4 Poles Lighthouse Cycling Tour**” – takes you on single-day cycle outings to lighthouses at the island's four compass points. The excursions are spread out from mid-summer to mid-autumn, allowing ample preparation time in between for those who wish to tackle all four.

First up is the East Pole – **Sandiaojiao Lighthouse** tour (25km), in the Northeast and Yilan Coast National Scenic Area. You start off and end at the Fulong Visitor Center, in the beach-fun/cycling town of Fulong. The Sandiaojiao (Sandiao Cape) Lighthouse was built by the Japanese in 1935.

Second is the **West Pole – Guosheng Port Lighthouse** tour (36km), in the Southwest Coast National Scenic Area. The start and finish is at the Taiwan Salt Museum; this extremely flat region, home to many wetland areas, was once a major producer of sea salt. The Guosheng Port Lighthouse was built on a sandbar in 1957.

Third is the **South Pole – Eluanbi Lighthouse** tour (42km), in Kenting National Park. The start and finish is at the Eluanbi Lighthouse Square. The lighthouse, built by a British engineer for the Qing Dynasty government, went into operation in 1883.

Last is the **North Pole – Fuguijiao Lighthouse** tour (23km and 32km options), in the Guanyinshan and North Coast National Scenic Area. Start/finish for both options is at Zhongjiao Bay. The Fuguijiao (Fugui Cape) Lighthouse was first built by the Japanese in 1896; the current tower was erected in 1962.

Fuguijiao Lighthouse on the North Coast



USEFUL INFORMATION

Transportation Information

Taiwan Tourist Shuttle

(台灣好行)

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Website: www.taiwantrip.com.tw

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Travel Service Center of the Tourism Bureau (Taiwan Taoyuan Int'l Airport)

(桃園國際機場旅客服務中心)

Add: No. 15, Hangzhan S. Rd., Taoyuan City (桃園市航站南路 15 號)

Service Hotline:

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Terminal Two: (03) 398-3341

Website: www.taoyuanairport.gov.tw

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(高雄國際機場旅客服務中心)

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Website: www.kia.gov.tw

Taiwan Railways Administration

(臺灣鐵路管理局)

Tel: (02) 2381-5226

Website: www.railway.gov.tw

Taiwan High Speed Rail

(台灣高鐵公司)

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(台北捷運公司)

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