

High Mountain Trek:

IV. Hehuan Main Peak (phonetic sound --Hehuantsuifong)

(3275 m)

Wuling Parking Lots ---Foot Trail ----Hehuan Main Peak communication branch road --- Hehuan Main Peak

Brief introduction to the trek: Time requirement about 40-50 min.

In Depth Travel Guide: Summertime blossoms at Hehuan Mountain

The following blossoms will bloom sequentially during late spring and summertime:

April to May: When spring sweeps across the field, the blossoms of rhododendron (Ericaceae) lifted the curtain of flowering season. Yushan rhododendron (*Rhododendron pseudochrysanthum*) and Mori's rhododendron (*Rhododendron morii*) are bursting into vivid flowers at various mountain peaks and fringes of the forests. Flower viewers must have good timing, because high mountain rhododendrons have short blooming season, once you miss out on the flowering period, then you'll have to wait another year.

May to June: Following right on the footsteps of the rhododendrons, the red hairy rhododendron (*Rhododendron rubropilosum*) starts to bloom. The plant is shrubby in size, but produces profuse flowers. When the species is at full blooms, the whole Yushan cane alpine meadow is covered with a pink brushing. Truly a lovely sight to behold. The slopes at the trails from Hehuan Main Peak to Kunyang and from Siaofongkou to Hehuan North Peak (Peifeng) are the best flower viewing locations. Just about this time, the high elevation Formosan lilies are also putting an appearance on the stage of flower season.

After June: Gradually, all kinds and all colors of wild flowering plants start to join the chorus... The purple-flowered Alishan gentian, the yellow-flowered Yushan gentian, *Hypericum nagasawai* Hayata. ; while clusters of Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum* Sieb. & Zucc) bloom feverishly lest they are sidelined by pollinators. There are also Morrisone Erigeron (*Erigeron morrisonensis* Hayata.), *Adenophora morrisonensis* Hayata, Solidago (Golderrod) (*Solidago virga-aurea*), and *Parnassia palustris* L, etc., all putting forth their showiest floral outpours, vying to catch your sight. (Text written by Sheng-Chun Liao).

In Depth Travel Guide: Why Hehuan Mountain becomes the Mecca (popular place) of viewing snowscape in Taiwan?

When wintertime arrives, people talk about viewing the scenery of snow, they inevitably association the activity with the Hehuan Mountain. The reason is that in the winter, the 3000-plus-meter high peaks of the Hehuan Mountain suddenly changes from autumn's drab withering yellow-brown to a neat silvery costume, exhibiting an air of winter wonderland. This snowscape is highly appealing to the residents of Taiwan living in a subtropical island. Thus, every once when snow flurries fall, there are bunch upon bunches of people hasten up the mountains to catch a glimpse of northern snowy scenery.

Why is Hehuan Mountain becoming a Mecca (popular place) for viewing Taiwan's snowscape? There are climatic and topographic conditions. As the gusty northeasterly monsoon blow toward Taiwan, the Hehuan Mountain are the first high peaks to stand on its way and to feel the full brunt of its cooling effect. Meanwhile, there is another air stream blows in from the Pacific Ocean along the Liwu River Valley from the east up the mountains that is laden with moisture. The two streams happen to converge at the Hehuan Mountain area; leading to abundant topographical precipitations. Thus when the cold air mass brings in by Siberian cold front besets Taiwan; the abundant precipitations would turn to snow flurries and fall on the mountaintops.

Furthermore, the landscape of Hehuan Mountain has a slow east facing windward slope, whereas the western slope is steeper. Each time when snows fall, they tend to accumulate and not thaw out. Thus the snow pack usually can persist until spring warmth return in March before it slowly melting away.

The Wushe Branch Road (Hwy. No. 14A) of the Central Cross-Island

Highway passes right through the Hehuan Mountain region. Therefore, it has good transportation and high accessibility, thus becoming the most famous, as well as the most favored location for viewing Taiwan's snowscape. In high mountainous areas, there are often drastic climatic changes, however, with persistent low temperatures and vast temperature gradients between daytime and nighttime, the snowy slope is quite slippery and wet as well. Therefore, visitors coming up to view the snowscape must be well prepared in advance. They should clad in warm and rainproof clothing, furnished with personal medications, and equipped with gears for snowy terrains, such as snow sticks, crampons, and ice-axes, to make the trip safe and risk-free. (Text written by Mao-Yao Lin)

In Depth Travel Guide: Why the flowers of alpine plants particularly vibrant in colors?

In summertime, if you visit the high elevation mountainous regions of the Taroko National Park, you will be sure to notice that there are colorful wild flowers carpeting the ground, blooming in profuse colors of red, yellow, purple, white, etc., practically forming a sea of flowers. It is truly a beautiful sight to behold. These alpine plants seem to have flowers that are particularly rich and vivid in coloration. What are the reasons? There are two very important reasons. One is that the plants need to attract pollinators. In high mountainous areas, on average there are 3 to 4 months of snow-cover period. During which the ground hugging shrubberies are covered and frozen by snow and ice. The harsh climate represents a veritable ordeal to the survival of the plants. Thus, with the advent of spring thaw, these plants must complete the life-cycle events of shoot-growth, foliating, bud-formation, blossoming, pollination, fruit-bearing and seed dispersal all within the short growth period of eight or nine months. They must have good timing to let each life-cycle event proceeds smoothly. Hence, they put forth brilliantly colored flowers to attract insect pollinators, which in turn help them accomplish the vital task of fertilizing the seeds. Effective, attractive colors to pollinators thus are indispensable to the propagation of these plants.

A further, more important, reason is that the ultraviolet ray in the sunshine has inhibitive effect on plant growth. As alpine regions have thinner air, thus unlike plants in the plains that can rely on air to block UV irradiation, the alpine plants, in order to avoid the harmful effects of UV light, would have a greater concentrations of anthocyanin to absorb the excessive UV light. This causes their flowers to be more rich and brilliant in coloration.

When you are up there enjoying the beauty of these wonderful and diverse plants, please be reminded that do not try to dig them up and take home to cultivate in a spur of the moment impulse. As this act is not only illegal and destroy their original beauty, but also that most alpine plants would hardly survive in the plain. (Text written by Mao-Yao Lin)