TAROKO DM.qxd 12/31/1969 4:42 PM 頁面 1

TAROKO NATIONAL PARK

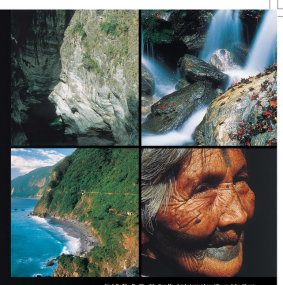
The fine and ever-changing grains of Taroko's rocks
Recount the formation of the earth over the ages.

The unceasing murmur of Taroko's waters
Mirrors the leveling of mountains and formation of valleys.

The unswerving determination of Taroko's dwellers
Tells a bloody history of man's pursuit of life and existence.
The mountains and hills come and go;
The birth and death of creation never ceases.

The beauty of Taroko's life is beyond expression!

Clint Peaks Series (photographer: Liang, Tai-Jiang)



Up left: The Profile of Indian Head (photographer: Chang, John-Shan)
Copyright: The Beauty of Water and Stone (photographer: Lu ,Chun-Hsiung)
Down left: Cingshui Cliff (photographer: Chen, Ming-Chang)
Down right: A Tattered Old Man (photographer: Fang, Kuei-Chang)

Introduction

In 1937 during the Japanese Occupation, the Taroko Gorge was chosen as one of the eight scenic wonders in Taiwan. In 1937 the area, covering 270,000 hectares, was officially elevated to "The National Park of the Second Highest Mountain Range".

Taroko Gorge (photographer: Chang, John-Shan)

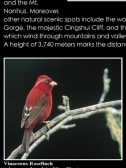
Unfortunately, all planning was halted due to the war in the Pacific.
On 06 May 1982 the Executive Yuan promulgated the "Tourism Resources Development Project," which directs the Construction and Planning Agency of the Ministry of Interior to take charge of the planning of the Taroko National Park and of delimiting its boundary lines. The project was submitted to and approved by the Executive Yuan in its 1877th session on 05 April 1984. It became effective after its announcement on 20 May of the same year.
After several deliberations and consultations were conducted with related agencies, and after a decision was made stating that the Liwu River Hydroelectric Project and the Chongde Industrial Park should not be developed within the confines of a national park, the entire project was again submitted to and passed by the Executive Yuan in its 2092nd session on 09 October 1984. The administrative office was finally established on 28 November. Later on, the Taroko National Park Police was established on 20 May 1988.

Current Situation

The picturesque scenery of Taroko has been changing over time. Situated in eastern Taiwan, Taroko National Park faces the Pacific Ocean to the east and borders the Syue Mountain (Snow Mountain) in the west. In the Park, peaks rise higher than the other rivers and creeks intertwine. Of the peaks listed in "Taiwan's One Hundred Peaks," twenty-seven are within Taroko, including the Clint Peaks and the Mt. Nanhua. Moreover, other natural scenic spots include the world-renowned spectacular Taroko Gorge, the majestic Cingshui Cliff, and the Liwu, Taroko, and Sanjiadong Rivers, which wind through mountains and valleys.

The Beauty of Mountain (photographer: Ao ,Shih-Chung)

A height of 3,740 meters marks the distance between the Liwu River, close to sea level, and the Mt. Nanhua, the highest peak within the Park. The huge altitude difference and the influence of the northeast monsoon over the area cause a significant change in both temperature and climate. Various weather conditions ranging from summer to winter climates can be experienced as one ascends in the Park following the Central Cross-Island Highway. The diverse landforms contain infinite life forms ranging from sub-arctic to sub-tropical. According to preliminary investigations, there are an estimated 1,908 native vascular plant species and 132 rare plant species. The vegetation along the mountainous and calcareous areas (lithophytes) is the most distinctive. The lush woods provide a habitat for wildlife. Investigations show the area's home to diverse life forms, including 31 mammal species, 144 bird species, 13 amphibian species, 28 reptile species, 16 aquatic species, more than 900 insects, 353 moth species and 302 butterfly species, giving Taroko a rhythmic pace of life.



Vinaceous Rosefinch (photographer: Lin, Ying-Tien)

White-faced Flying Squirrel (photographer:Huang ,Yao-Sheng)

The Beauty of Lofty Peaks

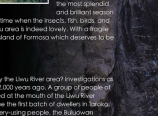
Lofty peaks and steep gorges are the main geological attractions of Taroko National Park. The high terrain slopes to the east, with approximately half of the mountainous area over 2,000 meters above sea level. Moreover, a dith of the area are peaks reaching over 3,000 meters above sea level. Of "Taiwan's One Hundred Peaks" twenty-seven can be found in this area, of which the natural ecology of the Mt. Nanhu area has the most distinguishing feature.
Mt. Nanhu is the tallest peak in Taroko National Park at 3,740 meters above sea level. Its terrain is mainly slate and formed in the Tertiary Age. The soil is shallow and a portion of the area is composed of slate and argillite. Investigations have shown that the Mt. Nanhu region has remnants of the glacial epoch, such as the cirque, ice caps, and U-shaped valleys. Average annual rainfall exceeds 3,400 mm. Temperature is low the whole year round and the area is ice-bound for more than four months each year.
The Nanhu climate at the Nanhu cirque, similar to a tundra region, can be said to belong to an alpine tundra ecological system. This is significantly precious for Taiwan, which is situated in a subtropical region. This unique habitat breeds a unique ecological system. Of the 40 rare plant species the Epilobium nankotaizanense Yamamoto, can be said to be the most typical. Summer is the most splendid and brilliant season. In the Mt. Nanhu region, as well as the time when the insects, fish, birds, and other wildlife are active. The Mt. Nanhu area is indeed lovely. With a fragile natural ecology, it is a treasure of the island of Formosa which deserves to be cherished.

Zhongyangjian Mountain (photographer: Lin ,Yo-Yi)

Yushan juniper (photographer: Lin, Mao-Yao)

Cultural Heritage

When actually did man start to occupy the Liwu River area? Investigations as of now conjecture that it was around 2,000 years ago. A group of people of mixed Chilin and Pehran cultures arrived at the mouth of the Liwu River (Yuhhli site), settled down, and become the first batch of dwellers in Taroko. Soon afterwards another painted pottery using people, the Buluowan Shihsanhang culture, inhabited the middle and lower reaches of the Liwu River. Prehistoric sites have been found at seven places, such as Buluowan and Sboa.
Two to three hundred years ago the East Seideg group of the Atayal tribe, the Taroko and Tsaisai groups, which used to inhabit the upper reaches of the Jhuashui River, moved east and settled down along the Liwu River area and the upper and middle reaches of the Jhuashui River. After the 1914 Taroko incident and the 1930 Wushe incident the Japanese made them move to the lower areas or the plains. As of now they have been discovered 79 remnant sites of the settlements.
In traditional Taroko society the men are gallant and the women are good at weaving. They practice patrilineal inheritance. In a settlement the tribesmen are composed of one or several Gaya groups (co-ceremonial groups). Religious belief is mainly worship of ancestral spirits. Burning and then tilling agricultural land is the traditional means of survival, while hunting, gathering, and fishing are the secondary means of sustenance. The Taroko used to wear facial tattoos, but which custom was banned during the Japanese Occupation. The facial tattoos have special meaning in the Taroko traditional culture. The marks not only serve as tribal identification and a sign for adulthood, they also were their posthumous passports to the realm of ancestral spirits.



Tribal Rites (photographer: Chang ,John-Shan)

Cingshui Cliff

Once one of the eight wonders in Taiwan, the Cingshui Cliff is the only place of Taroko that borders the ocean. The shore on which the cliff is situated on a fault, formed mainly of gneiss, marble, and green schist. The near-vertical cliff towering ashore than 1,000 meters is formed by the endless lashing and beating of the Pacific Ocean on its rocky structure, which makes it difficult to crumble. This very rare geological phenomenon occurs along the eastern coast of Taiwan stretching from Heren to Chongde for 21 kilometers.

Cingshui Cliff (photographer: Lin, Mao-Yao)

Formosan macaque

Evergreen broadleaf vegetation abounds in the valley along the Cingshui Cliff. Due to the monsoon, there is a distinction between the amount of rainfall in summer and in winter. This causes narrow vegetation in a subtropical rain forest to grow and flourish. Large-leaved nanmu and autumn maple trees are typical plant species.
The history of the roads over the Cingshui Cliff can be traced as far back as 1874, the 13th year of the reign of Emperor Tung-chih. When Lua To-chun led the people in opening up the Pelu, or Northern Road, Pelu was the earliest road used for the purpose of contact with other places and was also the first government sponsored construction of a road. In 1927 the Japanese converted it into a highway, which took five years to complete. By 1932 the highway was officially opened and was called the "Coastal Highway." After Taiwan retrocession, it was renamed Su-Hua Highway, (Su-ao to Hualien)

Taroko Gorge

The ongoing erosion by the Liwu River carving away at the stones and the constant uplifting of the ground over billions of years, and the weathering and erosion on the marble rock stratum have produced "extreme beauty of the world and a pleasing delight of hills and waters," which is the Taroko Gorge.
Taroko Gorge has a different kind of geological structure and phenomenon. The soil does not easily accumulate, and water is not easily saved. Vegetation includes mainly light-demanding and drought-enduring plant species that grow on rocky area. However, the frequent stratum movement causes the vegetation to show signs of succession preventing it from flourishing.

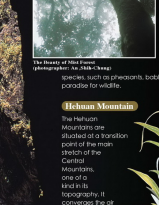
Mutsuzu's Green Tree Frog

The Central Cross-Island Highway zigzagging across the Taroko Gorge is said to be a piece of fine handicraft. Construction started on 07 July 1956 with five to six thousand men working simultaneously at different sections of the highway. Periodic typhoons and earthquakes often cause deaths and destruction to the construction and equipment. Constructing the highway cost NT$400 million and it took three years, nine months and 18 days to finish it. The highway was opened to the public on 09 May 1960.

Taroko Gorge (photographer: Ao ,Shih-Chung)

Bilyu Sacred Tree

The rock stratum around the area around Bilyu's Sacred Tree with a sea level of approximately 2,000 meters, is mainly schist and phyllite. The most common geological features are ledging and folding. Guanyuan and Kalabao are typical examples.
The Bilyu Sacred Tree refers to the 3,200 year-old ancient Luanta China fir. The area, where coniferous and broadleaf trees abound, is situated where cold and warm temperatures meet. Due to the influence of its geologic structure and weather, fogs and mist are a frequent phenomenon. Flora is lush. Besides the hardy conifers, such as the Morrison spruce (Picea morrisonicola Hay.) and the Chinese hemlock, there are deciduous trees, such as kawakami maples, Taiwan red maples, and hairy maples, which shed common-turned leaves that go flying and dancing about in the air, adding color to the autumn season. Diversity of composition in the forest provides ample food supply. A habitat which has both complexity and variation is very important to animals. Most commonly sighted are large-, medium- and small-sized mammals, including the Formosan sebow (Capricornis crispus swinhoei), Formosan reeve's munjac (Muntiacus reevesi micrurus), Formosan macaque (Macaca cyclopsis), and squirrels. Also seen are bird species, such as pheasants, babblers, and titmice. The area can be said to be a paradise for wildlife.



The Beauty of Mist Forest (photographer: Ao ,Shih-Chung)

Hehuan Mountain

The Hehuan Mountains are situated at a transition point of the main stretch of the Central Mountains, one of a wide-in-the topography. It converges the air current along the Lanyang and Liwu Rivers, producing abundant rain in the summer and snow in winter. The average annual rainfall in the Hehuan area is 3,400 mm; average annual temperature is 5.3 °c. Mainly slate, its geology belongs to the Miocene epoch.

Small Chinese Civet

The Taiwan fir and the Yushan cane are the typical vegetation in the Mt. Hehuan area, with both compelling against each other creating a succession effect. After the plum rains each year the area turns verdant with the blossoming of the Yushan Cane. From June to September the garish flowers fill up the mountains; this is the season when the mountain flora shows off its brightest and gayest forms. By late autumn when everything has turned withered and yellow, only lush firs stand tall and straight. In the season when snow falls thick and fast, the shiny-green fir overflowing with life stands out against the silvery snow. Everywhere there is vigor and exuberance.
The most common insects in the Yushan Cane grasslands are the Formicoidae and the Cicadelidae. Their growth and distribution follow the cane's growth season. The Alpine accentor, Taiwan laughing thrush, and the Vinaceous rosefinch (Carpodacus rhodopeus) inhabit the boundary between the grassland and the forest. Mt. Syue grass lizards and the Formosan salamanders are often seen in the grassland.

Hehuan Mountain (photographer: Lin, Mao-Yao)

Formosan salamanders (Hynobius formosanus) are often seen in the grassland (dwarf bamboo) areas or the slope area with crushed stones. The golden weasel, which mainly feeds on Mountain field voles and Formosan field mice, is the larger-sized mammal commonly seen in the Mt. Hehuan area. A tightly linked food chain is undoubtedly manifested in this area.
For purposes of war, governance, and physical exercise, the Japanese proceeded to construct and repair roads of the Mt. Hehuan area several times from 1914 to 1935. The old road passes through the Mt. Hehuan area linking Taroko and Wushe and it takes approximately four days to walk the entire length. The ski training center today used to be a station of the Army camp, which the Japanese Governor General personally commanded around 1914 when the Japanese launched Taroko war.

Nanhu Willowherb

Taroko Gorge (photographer: Chuang, Ming-Ching)

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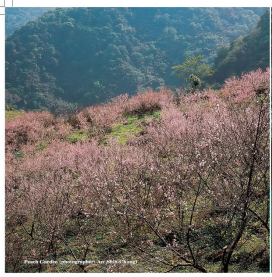
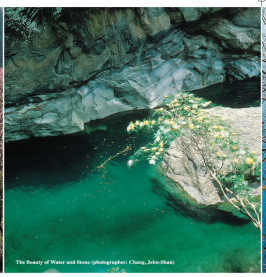
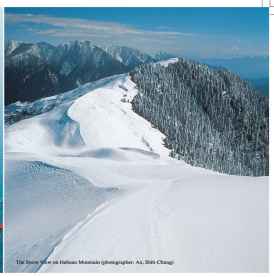

Fault Corridor (photographer: An, Shih-Chang)


The Beauty of Water and Stone (photographer: Chang, Jeffen-Shan)

The Coloring of Maple (photographer: Chang, Ming-Cheng)


The Snow Scene on Hehuan Mountain (photographer: An, Shih-Chang)

Hiking Trails

Distance between Tourist Spots & Elevation

Hualien 20km Tarroko 2.7km Eternal Spring Shrine 4.5km Shakadang 3.5km Swallow: Swallow Grotto 1.4km Jhihheng Bridge 2.5km Jhuyueliang: Tunnel of Nine Turns 2.2km Chihmu Bridge 3.3km Lyushui 2.7km Tianxiang 4.8km Wushetan 2.4km Huitouwan 2.7km Sitiao 2.4km Lushui 1.4km Shirulyang 4.6km Chi-an 1995m Shiyu Sacred Trail 2.7km Guanyuan 4.5km Dayding 2.9km Lishan 1.8km Su-ao 75km ↑ S.to↓ Siaokongkou 2.7km Mt.Hehuan 2.6km Wushe 1.8km

◆ Suhua Areas Trail

(165km and 320km)

The distance from Heren to Taroko is approximately 19 kilometers, within which trails, which take approximately 20 minutes to walk, lead to the coast for sightseeing from Heren (at km168.2 (Hwy. 9) and the northern opening of the Chongde Tunnel (at km 174.4 of the Hwy. 9). Sights to be seen include the coastal plant ecosystem, gravel beach, the Cingshui Cliff, and the Pacific Ocean.

Cingshui Cliff
(photographer: Wu, Chih-Hao)

◆ Shakadang Trail (4.5K)

The Shakadang Trail, a narrow path, begins at the descending steps from the Shakadang Bridge, and winds over the marble precipice. The hike to 3D Cabin takes approximately 2.5 hours round trip. The waters of the Shakadang River remain clear greenish the whole year round, and the beauty of the waters and the rocks are especially matchless. The Shakadang Valley used to be the life center of the Taroko tribe residents, and thus is the best place to visit to explore Taroko life and culture.

Shakadang River
(photographer: Liu ,Mao-Yao)

◆ The Eternal Spring Shrine (Changchun Shrine) Trail (1.9K)

The Eternal Spring Shrine is a cliffy circular trail, which begins at the Changxuang temple, crosses a suspension bridge, and ascends along a series of steps. It then passes a bell tower and ends at the old Changchun Bridge. The trail takes approximately one hour to walk. The high altitude along the trail allows one to view the fantastic sight of neighboring hills and springs from afar. Moreover, there are tablet inscriptions on the opening of the Central Cross-island Highway at several points along the trail, such as in the Kuanyin Cave, which are worth paying a visit and reflecting on the past events.

Eternal Spring Shrine
(photographer: Yu, Ying-Lung)

◆ Tunnel of Nine Turns Trail (1.9K)

The trail starts from either one of the east and west entrances to the Tunnel and takes about 30 minutes to walk. Along the trail one can enjoy the marble gorges, the rivers, the cliffs, the tunnel, and the ecosystem of the vegetation growing amidst the rocky terrain. What's more, one can also observe the phenomenon of ascending air current. This trail is one of the cream of Taroko Gorge's trails. (Due to the rockfalls, the trail is closed.)

Tunnel of Nine Turns
(photographer: An, Shih-Chang)

◆ Lyushui Trail (1.97K)

The Lyushui Trail was once a section of the Old Cross-Hehuan Mountain Road. A walk on this Trail takes approximately an hour, which includes passing through a small suspension bridge allowing for good views of the river below, an old road, steep cliffs, and the ecosystem of the vegetation on the rocky ground. The visitor is advised to secure a map and follow the route shown.

Lyushui Trail
(photographer: Chang, Jeffen-Shan)

◆ Baiyang Trail (1.8K)

Proceeding 500 meters west of Tiantsiang, then turning left to pass through a tunnel 380 meters long, and following the Wahei-er and Tachi Jill Rivers, one gets to pay a visit to the Baiyang Waterfall in around one and a half hour walk back and forth. Along the trail can be seen alternating marble and schist patterns, gorges, waterfalls, rivers, and the ecosystem of forerunner vegetation.

Baiyang Trail
(photographer: Chang, Jeffen-Shan)

◆ Lotus Pond (Lianhuachih) Trail

(1.6K×2.1K)

Following the narrow path along a river from Huitouwan, which is a 180-degree turn at the 163.4k point of the Central Cross-island Highway, one gets to the Jumei Suspension Bridge after a 30-minute level hike. Further on the other side of the Bridge is a zigzag path precariously ascending to the Lotus Pond, which takes about one and a half hour to walk. The Lotus Pond used to be the ancient site of the Suwasalu village, a settlement of the Taroko tribe.

Lotus Pond (photographer: An, Shih-Chang)

◆ Huoran Pavilion Trail (1.97K)

The Huoran Pavilion is situated at the Km 160.2 point of the Central Cross-island Highway. From here you can overlook the Tianxiang area and the neighboring hills and vegetations. The difference in altitude is 600 meters. Because of serious foundation collapse only a 500 meter stretch of the trail down from the pavilion is open. The original route has to be taken back.

Huoran Pavilion (photographer: An, Shih-Chang)

◆ Shihmen Mountain Trail (0.8K)

The entrance to the Shihmen Mountain Trail is located at the 33.5K point of the Provincial Highway No. 14A. A 30-minute walk will enable one to reach the peak, which, compared to the other peaks, is the easiest to reach. On top of the peak the field of vision is wide. This mountain is also one of the best places to admire Mt. Hehuan vegetation.

A closer view of Mt. Sanchiantai from Mt. Shihmen (photographer: Kao, Jhin-Ying)

Contact Numbers

Taroko National Park Headquarters (03) 8621100-6
Buluowan Service Station (03) 8612528
Leshui Exhibition Hall (03)8691190
Tianxiang Service Station (03) 8691162
Mt. Hehuan Service Station (04)2599119 5
Taroko National Park Police Corps (03) 8621405~6
Park Police- Wanshan Service Team (03) 8691202
Park Police- Mt. Hehuan Service Team (04)2599119 1

E-mail Address: tarokosp@taroko.gov.tw
Website Address: http\www.taroko.gov.tw

Don'ts to Remember

In accordance with Article XIII of the National Park Law, the following behaviors are prohibited inside the National Park:

1. Destroying or burning trees and other vegetation or starting a fire
2. Hunting animals or fish
3. Contaminating water or air
4. Plucking flowers
5. Etching words or drawings on trees, rocks, or signposts
6. Throwing fruit peelings, paper, or other pollutants.
7. Driving and parking vehicles in unauthorized area
8. Other behavior or actions prohibited by National Park authorities

Safety Regulations

1. The ascending elevation of the Central Cross-Island Highway from low altitude to high altitude makes for a significant change in climatic conditions. Visitors intending to go up to higher altitude should prepare warm clothing. Hikers are also reminded to watch out when hiking along the section from Sinbaiyang to Guanyuan, which easily fogs up.
2. It is not recommended to proceed along the Central Cross-Island Highway or the side trails within one week after a heavy rain or an earthquake to avoid getting hit by fallen rocks. Otherwise, extra care should be taken.
3. Falling tiny rocks are usually followed by larger ones. Visitors should be alert and leave the area immediately after warning the other people in the area. In the event that rocks are falling and there is no time to escape, visitors should lean against the walls of the rocks and cover their heads with their hands while keeping their bodies low.
4. In altitudes of over 2,500 meters in the event that the lack of oxygen and the lower air pressure cause symptoms of mountain sickness such as erratic and rapid breathing and pulse rate, asthma, fatigue, or nausea, the hiker should descend immediately to a lower altitude.
5. As a safety precaution, visitors should keep distance during an encounter with wildlife. Visitors should not provoke or feed the animals.
6. Visitors should beware of poisonous snakes and wasps during the summer and autumn months.
7. A tiny spark can provoke a fire. Visitors should take extra care with fire hazards.
8. Before entering the mountain areas, adequate climbing equipment should be prepared and a permit to enter ecological protection areas should be secured. It is also advisable to hire a licensed mountain guide. For the permits application, please contact the Recreation & Service Division. Tel: (03) 8621100#604 or (03) 8621576
9. The most enchanting places are the most dangerous ones. Visitors should take extra care for their own and their company's safety, as well as maintain the cleanliness of the surroundings and observe National Park regulations and prohibitions.

White-eared Sibia
(photographer: Lin, Ying-Tien)

Rosea Rehderianum
(photographer: Yang, Pei-Chang)

Fortunes Mannerist
(photographer: Chang, Ming-Cheng)

Taiwan Ilex
(photographer: Liu ,Mao-Yao)

Stejneger's Green Tree Frog
(photographer: Pan, Chien-Hong)

Rhododendron morii(Yamam) T.Hayata
(photographer: Lu ,Shang-Yu)

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