

Building the Central Cross-Island Highway

More than half a century ago, countless road-builders defied river and mountain as they blazed a new trail, driving roads through mountains and constructing bridges across water, sweating tears, sweat and blood like dark red cherries across the Taroko Gorge mountain forest area. Taking three years, nine months, and eighteen days, and leaving in its wake close to one thousand casualties, the beautiful completed road snaked its way through ravine and mountain. From this point onwards, the Central-Cross Island Highway was ready to spread magnificent scenery and art and culture to the world.

CENTRAL CROSS-ISLAND HIGHWAY

Prologue

On May 9, 1960, construction of the first Cross-Island Highway in Taiwan, the Central Cross-Island Highway, was completed. The building of this Highway was considered a mission impossible back then and took four years of grueling work and cost 225 precious lives before the daunting task was accomplished. Without great sacrifice of the road workers and, in particular those who died during its construction, people today would not have the privilege to use this beautiful highway. That's why we should be grateful and keep their contribution in mind whenever we travel on it.

From site survey, measurement, construction, highway opening, re-settling veterans, promotion of agricultural activities in mountainous areas, organizing the Central Cross-Island Highway Hiking Team, and establishment of the National Park, touching stories of many people have emanated from the Central Cross-Island Highway. They are an important chapter of Taiwan's history. These stories and Taroko are, moreover, both important cultural assets of Taiwan.



exploration. This route starts from Wushe, winds its way along Zhuoshui River, crosses Hehuan Mountain, then follows the course of Liwu River east and ends at Taroko.

Based on economic development and military considerations, a team conducted site surveys of two new routes linking Taichung and Hualien, and Taichung and Luodung to study their feasibility in 1954. After detailed research and careful deliberation, the final decision to choose the Taichung to Hualien route as the main road was made.

In March 1955, the Cross-Island Highway Development Commission was set up under the Veterans Affairs Council. The Commission then established the Highway Construction Department and Budget Planning Department. The Ministry of Economic Affairs was responsible for resource investigation, while the Bureau of Highways took charge of surveying work. At the end of 1955, the Bureau of Highways sent 4 survey teams to conduct surveying work. Each team had about 60 members, including engineers, surveying workers and laborers. A total of about 240 people were involved and it took them 6 months to complete their work.

The Central Cross-Island Highway has three roads: the main road, the branch road and the "supply road". The main road in the mountain area begins at Dongshi, winds its way up along the Dajia River, passes Lishan, crosses through Hehuan Yakou (today's Dayuling), then follows the course of the Liwu River east before it passes Guanyuan and ends at Taroko. The branch road starts from Lishan and then goes northward; then it passes Huanshan and crosses through Siyuan Yakou before it winds its way down along the Lanyang River, passes Siji and ends at Yilan (today's Yilan branch road). The supply road was built to expedite the supply of living and construction materials (today's Wushe branch line). It starts from Wushe, and then passes Kunyang before it joins the main road at Hehuan Yakou. The total length of the main and branch roads is 345.56 kilometers.

Reasons for the Building of the Central Cross-Island Highway

Mr. Chiang Ching-kuo once explained the three reasons for building the Central Cross-Island Highway. First, national defense required a rapid and convenient transport artery crossing the Central Mountain Range and linking west and east Taiwan. Second, the highway was needed to facilitating national economic development and natural resource development in mountainous region. Third, the construction created job opportunities for military veterans.

Exploration and Route Selection Route setting and surveying

The preparation for the Central Cross-Island Highway began in the autumn of 1949 when the Bureau of Highways started on paper route setting. From 1950 to the end of 1951, three exploration teams were dispatched to this area for site survey and route selection. In March, 1952, a group of experts decided to choose the north route after on-site



in summer student boot camps of the China Youth Corps and workers hired by the government and private companies. Members of the Retired Servicemens'

Engineering Corps were the largest group and made up over half of all workers. In addition, some aboriginal people also engaged in this unprecedented highway construction project.

From route setting on paper, site-survey, design and planning to construction, it took about 10 years to build the Highway. Actual road building work took 3 years, 9 months and 18 days to complete. The project cost about 430 million NT dollars and at least 1000 workers were killed or injured by natural disasters and construction accidents. After strenuous efforts, the Central Cross-Island Highway was opened to traffic. The Highway not only shortened the distance between the east and west of Taiwan, it also made the breathtaking landscape of Taroko Gorge and the Central Mountain Range accessible to people.

Constant danger Many deaths and injuries

Taiwan is located at the juncture of the Eurasian plate and the Philippine Sea plate and is thus frequently hit by earthquakes; it is also on the route of many typhoons in the Western Pacific Region. Typhoons and earthquakes are important natural phenomena of this island.

Facing the threat of earthquakes and typhoons and a harsh and unforgiving working environment, the workers building the Central Cross-Island Highway faced difficult challenges throughout the



construction period. The cycle of damage and reconstruction repeated itself over and over again. For road builders surviving dreadful accidents that caused heavy casualties, horrific memory still lingers whenever they reflect on the past. One of such example was the earthquake of magnitude 6 in February, 1957 that causing serious damage to the Heliu construction area between Taroko and Xipan and over 20 deaths and injuries. In 1958, Typhoon Winnie also caused heavy casualties on the Highway when it hit Taiwan. Natural disasters like these were common during the construction period.

What's more, due to the absence of modern construction equipment back then, most workers used shovels, hammers and crowbars to do their work. Rock and earth were removed manually with these primitive tools. Holes were drilled manually in which to



place explosives to cut through the rock face. However, inappropriate management and control practices often caused casualties in such explosions.

Local residents of Taroko, saw people carried out of the construction site on stretchers every day back then. Among the people who died, many were killed by landslides and falling rocks in a terrible way. Currently, a total of 225 workers who died in line of duty on the Highway are enshrined in the Eternal Spring Shrine.

Road Workers Settled in the Mountains Developed High Mountain Agriculture

During Highway construction, farms were set up in several places like Xibao to grow vegetables and fruits for road workers. After the Central Cross-Island Highway was opened to traffic, the Veterans Affairs Council started to set up farms in different places like Wuling, Fushoushan, Wushe and Xibao to re-settle veterans. Some road workers also established settlements along the Highway and made a living by farming. Some of them married local aboriginal women and became new residents along the Highway. The government encouraged and promoted farming activities in these mountainous areas, in order to increase income of the residents. People started to grow fruits and vegetables in farms along the Highway and they became important suppliers of such agricultural produce in Taiwan.

The people and stories of the building of the Central Cross-Island Highway

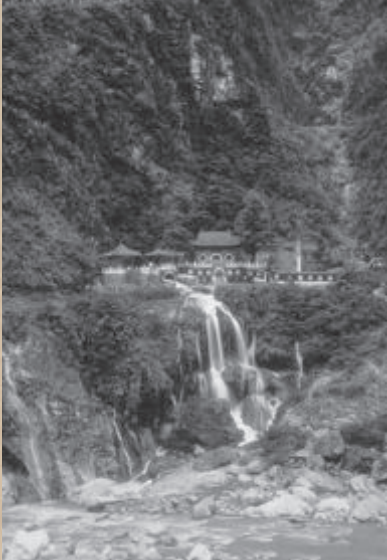
Many people were involved in planning, design, construction, and supply for the Highway building. From high-ranking officials and celebrities to ordinary people, everyone has a touching story about the Central Cross-Island Highway. We will now present touching stories of Mr. Chiang Ching-kuo, Lin Ze-bin, Jin Heng and the Fool's Cliff.

The main proponent of the highway- Mr. Chiang Ching-kuo

Lin Ze-bin, the Directorate General of Highways then, once said, "the Cross-Island Highway would not have come to existence without Mr. Chiang Ching-kuo". The highway was the result of tremendous efforts by Mr. Chiang, who was then the Deputy Minister of the Veterans Affairs Council. During the survey and construction process, he took the lead in 21 visits, crossing mountains, sleeping and eating outside, enduring hardship and facing danger. One of these visits, which was "adventurous", according to Chiang, lasted as a full three months. During the construction period, he often visited construction sites in the mountains with a small entourage to meet road workers in person and expressed his appreciation for their courage and efforts. He even stayed and spent Chinese New Year with them! Mr. Chiang once said, "Some sections of the Cross-Island Highway have been opened to traffic. Many visitors like the beautiful scenery and magnificent landscape of this or that place. But few of them know this highway would not have existed without the hard work and sacrifice of the veterans."

Lin Ze-bin- a man who took part from start to finish

Mr. Lin Ze-bin engaged in the surveying and construction work from start to finish. In his memoirs, he said "this highway is the transportation infrastructure project that I have put most effort into in my life. When we conducted site surveys, I often encountered numerous locusts and poisonous snakes and had to struggle against unpredictable



earthquakes, flood and typhoons. Each battle against such adversity could last one or two months and I was lucky enough to survive them all. As the Cross-Island Highway cuts rugged mountains and deep valleys, sometimes we had to build the highway along steep cliff, which created unprecedented technical difficulties. For example, the results of our alignment survey and mid-line pile point arrangement in the Taroko Gorge area were challenged by professionals from Germany, UK, France, Australia, the US and Japan. The section between Taroko and Tianxiang is another example. Before we started to build the highway here, an American consultant thought that it would take at least three years to complete construction as we did not have rock drills. But eventually it only took one year to finish the work under my direction to carry out simultaneous operation on different sub-sections." After the Central Cross-Island Highway was opened to traffic, Mr. Lin never forgot his colleagues who died in the construction work and would visit the Eternal Spring Shrine on the first day of every Chinese New Year to pay his respects to them until he reached the age of 90. This annual ritual was carried on for 40 consecutive years before he passed away.

Jin Heng-killed in the line of duty

Jin Heng was Section Chief of Xipan Construction Branch in 1957. In the early morning of October 20, 1957, he was unfortunately killed in the line of duty at the age of 43 by a falling rock in an earthquake when he inspected construction work on a bridge. The bridge originally named "Bailong Bridge" was later named after him for his dedication in memory of his untimely death. A park named after him was also built next to the bridge. In the park, there is a monument erected by Mr. Chiang Ching-kuo with an inscription written by Mr. Chien Mu.



Calligraphy by Famous People Along the Highway

After the Central Cross-Island Highway was open to traffic, Taroko soon became famous for its amazing beauty. Many visitors came here, attracted by its well-deserved reputation; some high-ranking officials from different countries, KMT senior leaders, and famous artists and writers left their footprints and artistic works here, including superb paintings and touching literary works.

In 1960s, some KMT senior leaders with literary talent and famous calligraphers left calligraphy works to express their admiration for the beauty of the landscape or dedication of the road workers here. Such works were inscribed on concrete walls or cliffs at some famous tourist sites. Some of these calligraphers were as follows: (1) former National Policy Advisor and Senior Advisor Mr. Zhao Heng-ti, a calligrapher specializing in official and running-hand styles, who left his calligraphy of four characters "Lu Ge Chang Qing" (Literally meaning "Evergreen Taroko") at the entrance of Taroko. (2) Mr. Gao Yi-hong was the calligraphy and painting

teacher of Mr. Chiang Ching-kuo and also a calligraphy master of four different styles, particularly running-hand style. He left his calligraphy of four characters "Fei Yan Ying Bin" (Literally meaning "flying swallows greeting visitors") at Swallow Grotto. (3) Former National Policy Advisor Liang Hancuo, who was a master calligrapher specializing in cursive and running hand styles, left his calligraphy of four characters "Jiu Qu Pan Long" (Literally meaning "curled-up dragons at Nine Turns") at the Tunnel of Nine Turns.

As time goes, the calligraphy works and monument inscriptions created by social notables along the Central Cross-Island Highway have become important cultural assets of the Taroko National Park. They deserve to be cherished and well protected.

Beauty and Sorrow-- A Compromise Between Development and Conservation

The completion of the Central Cross-Island Highway was an important milestone in Taiwan's history and has had far-reaching, indelible impact in different aspects, including highway network building, agricultural activities in mountainous areas and tourism development. As time has passed and the social environment changed, the role and function of the Central Cross-Island Highway have also evolved. On November 28, 1986, Taroko National Park was established amid fierce debate about the importance of economic development and the need for environment protection. Creation of the Park was an encouraging advance for domestic environment protection movement. The role of the national park, which the Highway passes through, has since shifted from facilitating economic and tourism development to focusing on environment protection and education. The Central Cross-Island Highway now brings foreign and local visitors to Taroko and presents the spectacular scenery and rich cultural heritage of Taiwan to them.

The Central Cross-Island Highway is not only a key transportation route crossing Taroko National Park, but also a road featuring extraordinary diversity and natural and cultural beauty, as well as important historical spaces and cultural assets. Starting by visiting, recording and protecting this Highway and take real actions based on the inspiration drawn on such experiences, working hand in hand to preserve the natural and cultural assets of Taiwan and rebuild land ethics for the rebirth of "Beautiful Island--Formosa".



Visiting the Central Cross-Island Highway

From plain to mountain, the Central Cross-Island Highway meanders through broadleaved forest, mixed coniferous broad leaved forest, coniferous forest and arrow bamboo grove. The Highway is like a giant striking and dynamic scroll landscape painting, with magnificent peaks and rocks, gorgeous mountain valleys and waterfalls, lush green forests and fluffy cloud of sea. It has attracted numerous local and foreign visitors since the Highway was open to traffic.

Artists and writers also set out their journey here to seek inspiration. Some road workers call it home. Some young people see it as a must-visit destination in Taiwan.

As a key transportation route crossing Taroko National Park, the Highway has been a stage for many life stories, stories that people should know, appreciate, record and recount.

Come and roam along Central Cross-Island Highway, admire its natural beauty and get to know the stories of people here.

Tracing fantastic history and stories of the land of this legendary road.

Guanyuan

(117.3km)

Guanyuan is located on a mountain shoulder and a flat area below mountain ridge and is famous for its spectacular "sea of clouds". This was where Guanyuan Construction Branch was located during the construction period. After the Highway was opened to traffic, a maintenance squad was once stationed here for maintenance work on this section. In 1986, Guanyun Youth Hostel built by China Youth Corps was opened to the public. Next year, CPC Corporation set up the gas station, the highest gas station in Taiwan, here.



Ci'en

(132.8km)

The name Ci'en was given by late President Chiang Ching-kuo, son of Chiang Kai-shek. During the building phase of the Cross-Island Highway Ci'en Youth Hostel was once a guesthouse. After the highway opened it changed into a bus waiting room, and was one of the accommodation spots for the Central Cross-Island Highway Hiking Team.



Luoshao

(154km)

Once the office of the Luoshao Construction Branch, the branch that had special responsibility for construction of the eastern section of the Cross-Island Highway. There is also Luoshao Youth Hostel, nicknamed "the little White House", the construction of which was completed and usage began in 1974. It is considered a satisfying representative early work by Taiwanese architect Han Pao The. It was one of the main lodging locations of the Cross-Island Highway Hiking Team in earlier days.



Cimu Bridge

(172.9km)

In 1964, as Chiang Ching-kuo inspected the Cross-Island Highway, this marble bridge was in the process of being constructed. It was named Cimu Bridge, recalling the sacred mother of all who live beneath the heavens. This bridge was badly damaged by Typhoon Dot in 1990, and was completely rebuilt by 1995.



Xibao

(161.4km)

Xibao, which is famous for the Xibao Elementary school, grew vegetables and fruit for road workers during the Highway construction period. After the Highway was built, the Veterans Affairs Council set up a farm here to grow high-altitude fruit and vegetables where veterans could be resettled. Currently, the children of some veterans still make a living by farming here.



Swallow Grotto

(179km)

Tunnel of Nine Turns

(175.7km)

Taroko Gorge is world famous for its breath-taking scenery. In particular, the section from Swallow Grotto (Yanzikou) to Tunnel of Nine Turns (Jiuqudong) is the most spectacular part of the Highway. This section has preserved most hand-made marks and attracted numerous writers and painters to create their works here.



Jinheng Bridge

(Swallow Grotto Trail 0.4km)

Jinheng Bridge, originally called Bailong Bridge, was rebuilt after the original construction of the Central Cross-Island Highway, and its name was changed to commemorate Section Chief Jin Heng who was killed in 1957. As Typhoon Amber struck in 1997, the deluge of water led to the bridge being destroyed, and today's bridge was rebuilt by 2003.



Visitor Safety Information

- In areas over 2500 meters elevation the reduced amount of oxygen and lower air pressure can cause breathing to become more rapid, heart rate to increase or become irregular, shortage of breath, fatigue and nausea, all symptoms of altitude sickness. If you feel unwell you should immediately go to a lower elevation and, if you still feel unwell, quickly seek medical assistance.
- The Central Cross-Island Highway climbs from low elevation to high elevation and weather changes can be substantial in a short time. Visitors heading for medium/high elevation areas should bring warm clothes. Also, the Xinbaiyang to Guanyuan road section is often affected by heavy fog and extra care should be taken here.
- The Central Cross-Island Highway and the trails along with it are exposed to considerable risk of falling rocks in the week following heavy rain or an earthquake. Visitors are advised to stay away from such areas and exercise a high degree of caution. Falling small rocks are usually the sign big rocks will follow. Visitors should stay alert, leave such a place quickly and warn others. Visitors should crouch down with their hands on their heads when they hear or see rocks falling and are not able to leave quickly.
- There are geomorphic evolution activities in the section between Taroko and Tianxiang and this makes this area prone to occasional rock falls. Visitors travelling here on foot should wear safety helmets.
- Please pay attention to your own safety and that of fellow travelers at all times. On the park trails please wear a hard hat and other protective gear. Hard hats can be borrowed free of charge. Check our website to find out the helmet borrowing/returning point.
- In summer and autumn poisonous snakes and hornets are frequently seen and extra care should be taken when they are encountered.
- Visitors should keep their distance from wild animals for safety and shall not feed or disturb them.
- The most beautiful place can be also the most dangerous place. Please ensure safety of yourself and your companions all the time, do not litter and do not violate the National Park Act or engage in any prohibited activities. Thank you for your cooperation. We wish you a great journey on the Central Cross-Island Highway.

Please enjoy the beautiful Taroko on the Central Cross-Island Highway with a light heart and humble attitude!

Tourist Information

Gas Station: Xincheng, Taroko, Guanyuan
Taroko Park HQ Visitor Center 03-8621100-6
Police Station: Taroko, Tianxiang, Guanyuan
Lodging: Taroko, Bulowan, Tianxiang, Guanyuan, Songxue Lodge
Contact numbers
Visitor Center & Service Stations
Taroko Park HQ Visitor Center 03-8621100-6
Bulowan Service Station 03-8612528
Tianxiang Service Station 03-8691162
Mt. Hehuan Service Station 04-25991195
Suhua Service Station 03-8621100 ext. 320-322

Emergencies
Taroko National Park Headquarters 03-8621100
Recreation and Services Section 03-8621048
Ninth Division, the Seventh Special Police Corps, National Police Agency
Taroko Division 03-8621405-6
Taroko Division- Wenshan Branch 03-8691202
Taroko Division- Mt. Hehuan Branch 04-25991191
Emergency telephone number if no cell phone signal 112

Road Conditions

Highway No. 8(the Central Cross-Island Hwy.)- Taroko-Dayuling Section: Luoshao Hwy.
Maintenance Unit 03-8610775
Dayuling-Lishan Section: Guanyun Hwy. Maintenance Unit 04-25951224
Highway No. 14A-Wushe Branch Highway
Wushe-Mt. Hehuan Section: Puli Hwy. Maintenance Unit 049-2982066
Transport
Hualien Train Station 03-8355941
Xincheng(Taroko) Train Station 03-8611237
Hualien Bus Co. Terminal 03-8323485
Fengyuan Bus Co. Fengyuan station 04-2522203
Hualien Airport 03-8210700



Dayuling

(112km/41.7km)an County
Dayuling, originally called Hehuan Saddle(Hehuan Yakou), was renamed by Mr. Chiang Ching-kuo after Da Yu, the diligent flood control engineer in ancient China, to commemorate the hard-working road builders of the Central Cross-Island Highway. This is where the main road of the Highway joins its Wushe branch road line and the meeting point of the area of responsibility of Lishan Engineering Office and Heliu Engineering Office during the construction period.



Bilu Sacred Tree

(128.3km)

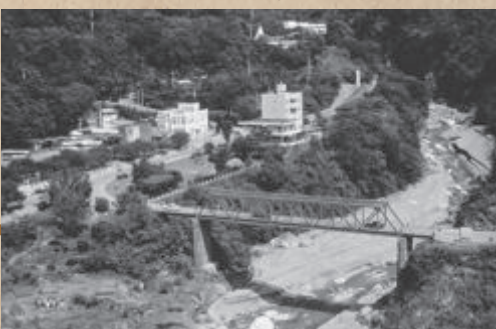
This dark green sacred tree, located in the cloud forest zone, is a giant Lunta Fir and, at 3,200 years old, it is the only tree along the highway which is more than 1,000 years in age. This place is a major scenic spot on the Cross-Island highway eastern medium elevation section.



Tianxiang

(169.5km)

Tianxiang had the former name Tabido, and during the road building phase it was known for a time as Dabeitou. Later its name was changed to commemorate Nan Song Dynasty scholar-general Wen Tianxiang. Tianxiang is an important transportation spot and lodging location on the Central Cross-Island Highway.



Xiangde Temple

(169.5km)

Building work began on Xiangde Temple in 1962, and work was completed in 1968. It is one of the best-known sights of the Tianxiang area. In May 2003, work on the newly constructed Pudu Bridge drew to a conclusion, and it replaced the old-fashioned and dangerous Pudu Suspension Bridge.



Eternal Spring Shrine

(Old Provincial Highway No. 8)
Eternal Spring Shine was established in 1958, and enshrines the heroes who gave their lives building the Central Cross-Island Highway. In 1980, and 1987, as a result of natural landslides, damage was caused. The building's current incarnation was completely reconstructed in 1989.



Changuang Temple

(old Provincial Highway No. 8)
After the Central Cross-Island Highway was opened to traffic, Hualien Tourism Association requested Master Shi Xinxing, who was born in Hualien, to select a place for the temple to adorn the beautiful scenery of Taroko Gorge. The site was selected in 1961 and the construction work began in 1963 after intense fund raising activities. The construction work was completed in 1966. As the temple is close to the Eternal Spring Shrine, which can be reached by a "sky ladder" from here, this temple was a popular destination for tourists and pilgrims between the 1960s and 1980s.



Taroko Entrance Gate

(187.5km)

Taroko Entrance Gate is located at the starting point of the east section of the Cross-Island Highway, and the towering Central Cross-Island Highway Arch, built in 1960, is the entrance point to the highway. In 2005 it was classified as a Hualien County historic structure.

