

Southern Taiwan



In the south, people's ties to rural folk culture are strongest. Local gods are more fervently worshipped, traditions more respected, and a clannish regard for kith and kin more obvious. And in a land of hospitable people, southerners shine as the most hospitable of all.

Outside of Taipei, the only cities really worth visiting are in the south: ie Tainan and Kaohsiung. Tainan has a temple heritage second to none, and a great array of local foods to sample. Kaohsiung is a harbour city on a mad drive to make up for decades of lost development time. Ten years ago we could hardly stand to drive past it. But these days you can feel the buzz (much like Taipei a decade ago) and couple of days here soaking it in would be well spent.

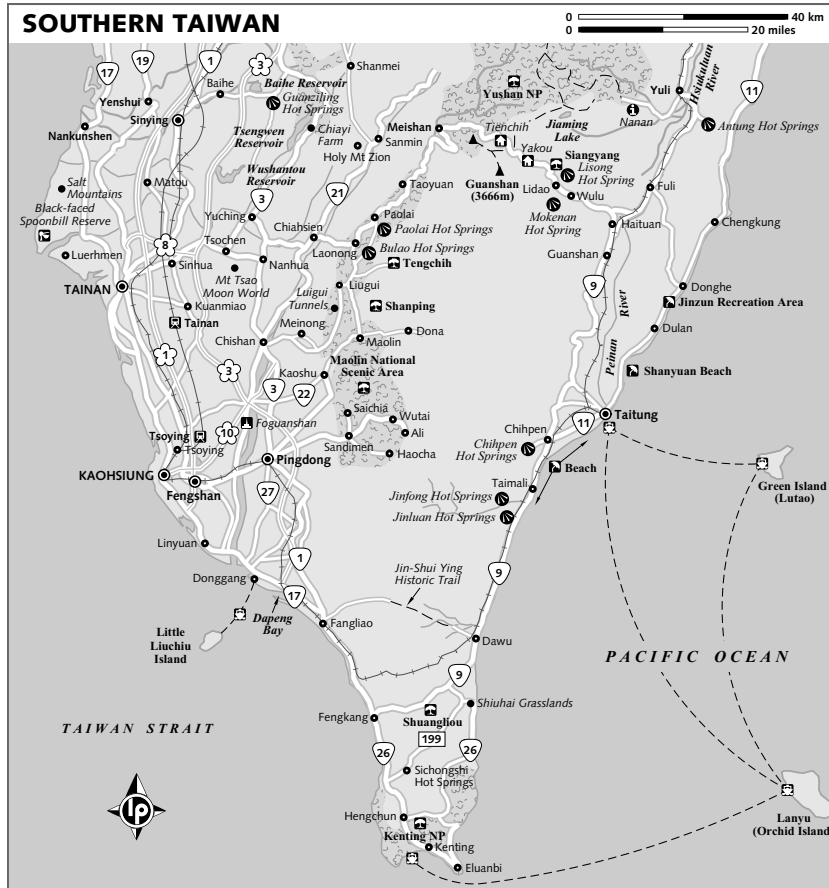
For some of the best mountain scenery in the country head to the South Cross-Island Hwy. This route literally crosses the island, and can be used as a walking path, with side trips up to 3000m-plus mountains and down to beautiful natural hot springs in the river valleys.

In fact, the south pretty much has it wrapped up for the nature-lover. There are two butterfly valleys – one of which (in Maolin) has recently been put on equal footing with the Monarch Butterfly Valley in Mexico – and a winter resting ground for the rare black-faced spoonbill. The southern landscape also varies from coastal mud flats, to grassy headlands, to majestic cypress forests.

Weatherwise, the south is hot and sticky in summer and warm and dry in winter. If you want to swim in January, head south.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Hike ancient forests and soak in natural hot springs along the **South Cross-Island Hwy** (p260)
- Bike through lush fields, eat traditional foods and shop at **Meinong** (p274)
- Explore Taiwan's temple heritage in the old capital of **Tainan** (p248)
- Swim or surf year-round in **Kenting National Park** (p282)
- Visit the winter resting grounds of the purple butterfly in **Maolin** (p277)
- Cross the southern tip of Taiwan on the **Jin-Shui Ying Old Trail** (p280), a steamy jungle route once used by the Qing dynasty military
- Get rained on with fireworks at **Yenshui** (p259)
- Scooter and snorkel around Taiwan's only coral island, **Little Liuchiu Island** (p281)
- Watch a ceremonial boat burn to the ground in **Donggang** (p280)



National Parks & Forest Recreation Areas

There are three national parks in the south. Beautiful, remote Maolin is a stronghold for aboriginal culture but also holds an important winter resting ground for the purple butterfly. The South Cross-Island Hwy runs through the southern end of Yushan National Park and there's some excellent hiking to be done there. Kenting National Park is a beach playground, though there are also some interesting protected areas few people venture into. Siangyang Forest Recreation Area is an excellent bird-watching venue. Shuangliou Forest Recreation Area has a gorgeous waterfall, while much of Tengchih Forest Recreation Area boasts intact virgin

forest. Shaping Forest Recreation Area offers peaceful trails, abundant plant life, and excellent bird-watching. There's something for everyone in this part of Taiwan.

Getting There & Around

It's easy to get to and around the major urban centres by public transportation. The High-Speed Rail (HSR) is convenient for travel to Kaohsiung but not Tainan (the station is 40 minutes walk from downtown). Scooters and cars can be hired in the cities and are recommended for travel into the countryside where public transportation is poor, such as in Meinong, Maolin and along the South Cross-Island Hwy.

TAINAN CITY 台南市

☎ 06 / pop 754,917

We've always been very fond of Tainan (Táinán), and always impressed with its array of temples and historical relics. But we often wondered if we simply needed to get out more. So one day we travelled to Beijing and saw some of the greatest architectural wonders of the Chinese world. And then we returned to Tainan and found we were no less impressed with it than before. No, it couldn't compare directly to Beijing, but then travel is not a zero sum game in our opinion, and the wonderful deserves to be praised as much as the amazing.

Tainan is the oldest city in Taiwan, and the fourth largest. It was here that Taiwan's

modern history began and it is here that much of its traditional culture continues to thrive. Outside Dutch-built forts, lively night markets sell dishes exclusive to the region. Inside hundreds-of-years-old temples, people *bobui* (toss divination sticks) to determine the best course of action, just as their ancestors did when the temple first opened. The only difference is that today, people then jump into their cars and head to air-conditioned homes.

But no-one seems worried by the dichotomy. Modernity is embraced in Tainan as much as the past is respected. There are shopping malls, luxury hotels, sharp-looking cafés and trendy bars. But there is also an approved NT3-billion-dollar budget for re-

living and restoring the old harbour area of Anping and its trove of historical sights. Tainan has industries producing metals, textiles and machinery, a few old masters working on traditional crafts, as well as a new science park that promises to bring the city into the avant-garde of Taiwan's hi-tech revolution.

You can visit Tainan any time of year, though we love winter when it's warm (in the high twenties on average) and dry, and few tourists are about (try and find all those conditions in Beijing). Traditional festival days are of course a great time to come, as are the birthdays of temple gods. Give yourself at least a couple of days here to see the sights and observe the local culture.

History

The Chinese first settled in the Tainan area in 1590. Not long after, the Dutch arrived. After colonising the island, the Dutch used Tainan as a base for their trade with Japan and China. The Dutch ruled from 1624 until 1662, the year they were expelled by the Ming loyalist Koxinga.

Koxinga established his central government in Tainan and built up the city. In 1683, when the Qing dynasty regained control of Taiwan and turned it into an official province, Tainan was chosen as the capital. Tainan remained the political, cultural and economic centre of the island until 1885, when the capital moved to Taipei. If you have a discerning eye, Tainan's pedigree is apparent by the stately quality of the city's temples and historical sights.

Orientation

Almost all the sights in Tainan are concentrated around the city centre (west of the train station) and the Anping District. Both areas are compact enough to get around on foot, though you may want a taxi or bus to take you from one area to the other.

Please note the English spelling on road signs in Tainan has changed since the last edition. It may change again before the shelf life of this one expires.

Information

Tainan is probably the most English-friendly city in Taiwan after Taipei. Nearly every sight worth seeing has English interpretation signs around it. Large map boards guide you along a walking-tour route similar to ours, though not identical (ours was first).

CULTURAL CENTRES

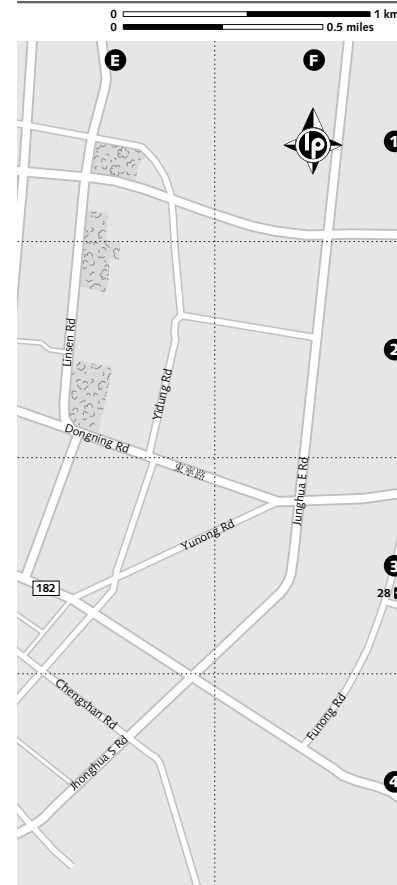
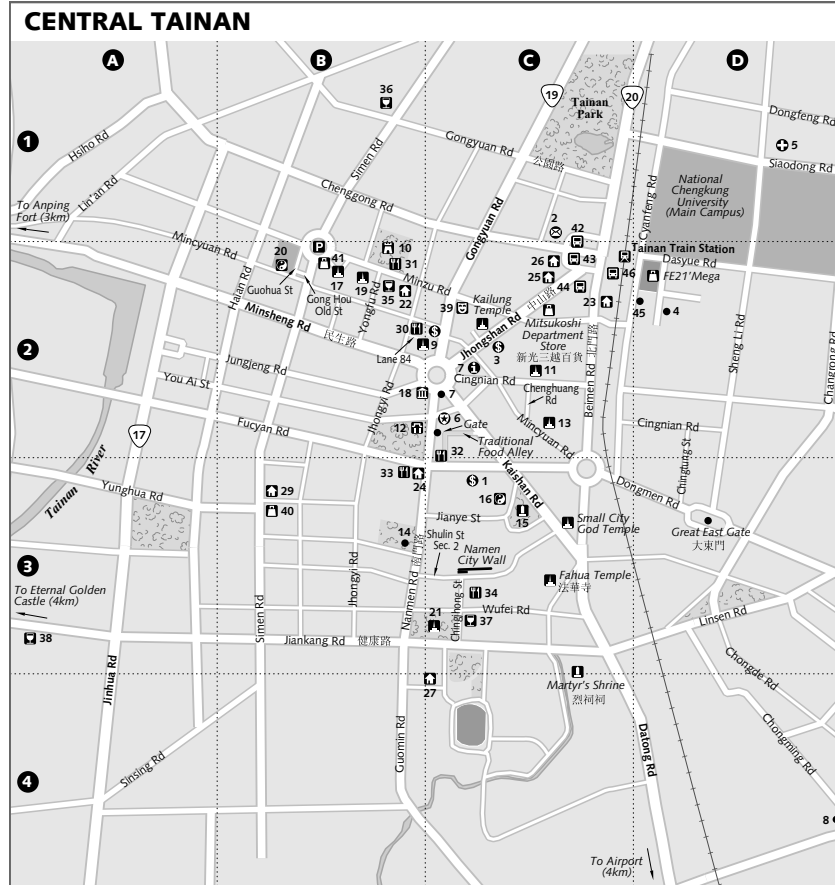
Tainan Municipal Cultural Centre (Map pp248-9; ☎ 269 2864; 332 Jonghua E Rd, sec.3; ☎ 9am-5pm)

INTERNET ACCESS

National Museum of Taiwanese Literature (Map pp248-9; ☎ 221 7201; www.nmtl.gov.tw; 1 Jhongjheng Rd; ☎ 8am-5pm, closed Mon) You can get free internet access in the library here.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Tainan City Government (www.tncc.gov.tw) A good resource, especially for anyone staying in Tainan long



INFORMATION		SLEEPING		ENTERTAINMENT	
Bank of Taiwan 台灣銀行.....1 C3	Official God of War Temple 祀典武廟.....19 B2	Cambridge Hotel 劍橋大飯店.....22 B2	Armory Pub.....36 B1	Chingjiong St 慶中街.....37 C3	Willie's Second Base 威利二壘酒吧.....38 A3
GPO 郵政總局.....2 C1	Water Fair Temple 水仙宮.....20 B2	Cheng Kuang Hotel 成光別館.....23 C2	Confucius Inn 劍橋南商文物會館.....24 B3	Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Department Store 台南新天地 新光三越.....40 B3	Shuang Chun Chang Shoes 雙全昌鞋行.....41 B2
ICBC 中國國際商業銀行.....3 C2	Wufei Temple 五妃廟.....21 C3	Hann Gong Hotel 漢宮大飯店.....25 C2	Hotel Tainan 台南大飯店.....26 C2	Tainan Kuang Tsai Embroidery Shop 光衫繡莊.....(see 35)	
Laundromat 洗衣店.....4 D2	National Cheng Kung University Hospital.....5 D1	內政部入出國及移民署.....6 C2	Photo Studio 照相館.....7 C2	Tainan Student Hostel 台南學苑.....28 F3	Taiyih Landis 大億麗緻酒店.....29 B3
Tainan Cultural Centre 台南市文化中心.....8 D4					
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		EATING		TRANSPORT	
Altar of Heaven 天壇.....9 B2	A Xia Restaurant 阿霞飯店.....30 B2	City Bus North Station 北站公車亭.....42 C2	Chikan Towers 赤崁樓.....10 B2	Chi Kin Dandanman 赤崁擔擔麵.....31 B2	City Bus South Station 南站公車亭.....43 C2
City God Temple 城隍廟.....11 C2	Green House.....32 C2	Hsingnan Bus Company 興南客運站.....44 C2	Confucius Temple 孔子廟.....12 B2	Lily Fruit Shop 莉莉水果店.....33 B3	Scooter Rentals 機車出租.....45 D2
Dongyue Temple 東嶽殿.....13 C2	Green House.....32 C2	UBus Station 統聯客運.....46 C2	Great South Gate 大南門城.....14 B3	Yu Shen Restaurant 優先素食西餐.....34 C3	
Koxinga's Shrine 延平郡王祠.....15 C3	Lady Linshui's Temple 臨水夫人媽廟.....16 C3		Matsu Temple 大天后宮.....17 B2		
National Taiwan Museum of Literature 國家台灣文學館.....18 B2					

term. It can be a bit tricky to navigate but there is a wealth of information (and pictures) on everything there is to see, do and consume in the city.

LAUNDRY

Laundromat (Map pp248-9; 111-1 Yu Le St; ☎ 24hr) Behind the train station, to the right of the FE21' Mega department store, is DIY laundry.

MEDICAL SERVICES

National Cheng Kung University Hospital (Map pp248-9; ☎ 235 3535; 138 Sheng Li Rd)

MONEY

There are ATMs in most 7-Elevens (which are everywhere) in Tainan. You can use the ATMs or change money at the following:
Bank of Taiwan (Map pp248-9; 155 Fuyuan Rd, sec.1)
International Commercial Bank of China (ICBC; Map pp248-9; 90 Jhongshan Rd)

PHOTO STUDIO

Fuji photo shop (Map pp248-9; 5 Nanmen Rd)

POST

GPO (Map pp248-9) Near the North Bus Station.

TOURIST INFORMATION

FYI South Magazine (www.taiwanfun.com) A free monthly entertainment magazine. You can pick up a copy at the information centre or many restaurants across town. You can also download it at the website. The magazine's

pull-out map is especially useful as it's completely bilingual and up to date with the changes to the English spellings on road signs.

Visitor Information Centre (Map pp248-9; ☎ 229 0082; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat & Sun) There are two centres in Tainan but the most convenient one for travellers is right in the train station. Staff speak English and have all the information you could need.

Sights

CENTRAL TAINAN

Chihkan Towers (Fort Proventia) 赤崁樓

One of the best preserved, or perhaps we should say reconstructed, historical sights in Tainan is this old **fort** (Chikān Lóu; Map pp248-9; 212 Minzu Rd; adult/child NT50/25; ☎ 8.30am-9pm). It's a splendid place to roam around, or even enjoy an outdoor concert on the weekends.

Chihkan has gone through many masters (Ming, Qing, Japanese and the Kuomintang or KMT, China's Nationalist party) since the foundations were first laid by the Dutch in 1653. At that time the seashore reached the fort's outer walls. Our favourite features are the nine stone turtles with tablets on their backs. These steles hail from the Qing dynasty and if you check the backs you can see where the carver made a mistake on one and, rather than starting over with a fresh slab, simply turned the stone around and redid everything on the other side. The craftsmanship is amazing.

There are English explanations around the site as well as a brochure you can pick up when you enter. At night the whole area around the fort is filled with shops and vendors selling traditional foods.

Official God of War Temple (Sacrificial Rites Temple) 祀典武廟

This is the oldest and most impressive temple (Si Diān Wú Miào; Map pp248-9; 229 Yongfu Rd, sec.2) in Taiwan dedicated to Kuan Kung, a Han dynasty general deified as the war god.

The temple's overall size and structure were established in 1690, though much splendid artwork and many historically valuable objects have been added over the years. The long deep rose-colored walls of this temple have always been one of its highlights for us. Other interesting features to note are the beggar seats built into the doorframe (so that the poor could beg alms from every visitor), the high threshold at the entrance (originally designed to keep women out!), and the bamboo-shaped poem on a scroll at the back, which contains words said to have been written by Kuan Kung himself.

Matsu Temple 大天后宮

This lively temple (Dà Tiānhòu Gōng; Map pp248-9; 18 Lane 227, Yongfu Rd, sec.2) once served as the palace of Ning Jin, the last king of the Ming dynasty. If you wish to confirm visually that a king's status is lower than an emperor's, count the steps to the shrine. There are only seven; an emperor would get nine.

Matsu is the most popular folk deity in Taiwan, with over 500 temples dedicated to her around the island. For more on Matsu see p216.

Some features to note (besides the elaborate carvings and paintings) include the 300-year-old Matsu statue, and the shrine in the back to Matsu's parents in an area that used to be King Ning Jin's bedroom. Look up and you'll see the roof beam where the king's concubines hanged themselves so many years ago (see Wufei Temple, p252).

For fun, check out the eyes and feet of the door guards. Notice something odd?

Altar of Heaven 天壇

Have you had a run of bad luck lately? Then visit this temple (Tiāntán; Map pp248-9; 16 Lane 84, Jhongyi Rd, sec.2) and pray to the supreme Taoist entity, the Jade Emperor (or Lord of Heaven),

to help you out. Tainan families have been doing this for generations on the 1st and 15th of every month.

The temple is noteworthy for two things. First, it has no statue of the god. The original temple was established as a temporary measure – 300 years ago! Second, there's a famous Yī (One) inscription over the altar. Yī signifies that for heaven and earth there is only one true way: humanity and righteousness.

National Museum of Taiwanese Literature 國家台灣文學館

The building that houses the new museum (Guó Jiā Tái wān Wén xué Guǎn; Map pp248-9; ☎ 221 7201; www.nmtl.gov.tw; 1 Jhongjeng Rd; admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm, closed Mon) was once the Tainan District Hall. Built in 1916 by the Japanese, it's a gorgeous example of colonial architecture. Even if literature is not your greatest interest, it's worth coming here just to wander the halls and relax in the foyer.

The museum highlights the development of Taiwanese literature from pre-Han aboriginals through the colonial periods up to the modern era. All exhibits and displays have English signs.

Confucius Temple 孔廟

You expect a **Confucius Temple** (Kōng Miào; Map pp248-9; http://confucius.cca.gov.tw; 2 Nanmen Rd; adult/child NT50/25; ☎ 8.30am-9pm) to exude the calm, grace and dignified beauty of traditional Chinese culture, and this, the first Confucian temple in Taiwan, doesn't disappoint. Nor do the grounds, which contain one of the largest and most beautiful banyan trees in all of Taiwan.

The temple grounds are free (and nice to sit in at night), but you must pay to enter the palace area. The receipt comes with an excellent short brochure and map of the temple. One thing to look for that is not on the

SIGHT PASS

If you plan to visit all the major sights, buy a pass (NT150, good for one year) at any of the following: Confucius Temple, Chihkan Towers, Koxinga Shrine, Anping Fort, Eternal Golden Castle, and the Former Tait & Co Merchant House.

Unless otherwise noted, temples are free and open from 9am till 5pm.

brochure is the stone tablet on the right as you enter the Edification Hall. The words on the tablet explain the school rules (the site was once a centre for Confucian studies), such as prohibitions against gambling, drinking and cheating.

At the time of writing there was a lot of work being done to the grounds beside the temple. Expect new walkways, ponds and a museum.

Across the street from the temple entrance is a **stone arch** built in 1777. It's now the gateway to a pedestrian street filled with cafés and small eateries.

Great South Gate 大南門城

The garrison commander in you will love the martial feel of this old **city gate** (Dà Nánmén Chéng; Map pp248-9; Lane 34, Nanmen Rd; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm), the only one in Tainan that still has much of its defensive wall intact. The inner grounds feature several cannons and a section of the old wall marvellously overgrown with thick roots. As with the Confucius Temple, the trees here are an attraction in themselves.

Koxinga's Shrine 延平郡王祠

When the Ming dynasty was overthrown by the Manchus in 1661, Koxinga (Cheng Cheng-kung) led his army to Taiwan with plans to restock supplies and then retake the mainland. He found the Dutch already here, but after nine months battle they surrendered and departed Taiwan.

Koxinga did much to improve conditions on the island. But, like the KMT of modern times, he did not live to see the Mainland retaken. He died after only a year in Taiwan, and his grandson surrendered to the Manchus in 1683.

There's a certain atmosphere of dignity surrounding the **Koxinga Shrine** (Yánpíng Jūnwáng Cí; Map pp248-9; 152 Kaishan Rd; adult/child NT50/25; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm), even though most of it is of rather recent origin: the original southern-style temple was rebuilt in a northern style by the KMT government in the '60s. Many of the artefacts are historical, however, including the boxes in the shrine that hold the original imperial edict from 1874 permitting the shrine to be built.

Beside the shrine there's an interesting **museum** featuring displays of traditional puppets and clothing.

Lady Linshui's Temple (Chen Ching Gu Temple) 臨水夫人媽廟

This elaborately designed and excessively ornamental **temple** (Línshuǐ Fūrén Mā Miào; Map pp248-9; 1 Jianye St) is dedicated to a woman – in this case, the goddess Lady Linshui.

For generations now, women have come to this temple to ask Lady Linshui to protect their children. This is demanding work and the goddess employs 36 assistants (three for each month), whose statuettes can be seen in little glass vaults around the inside walls of the temple.

In addition to offerings of incense, you'll often see flowers, face powder and make-up left at the temple.

Wufei Temple 五妃廟

When Koxinga's grandson surrendered to the Manchus in 1683, all hope of restoring the Ming dynasty ended. King Ning Jin, the last contender for the Ming throne, knew his time was up. Before he committed suicide, however, he urged his concubines to 'get thee to a nunnery'. The concubines refused, claiming their honour was as important as the king's, and hanged themselves on a roof beam in the bedroom of his palace. The palace is now the shrine to Matsu's parents at the Matsu Temple (p251) and the beam is still in place.

This dainty **temple** (Wǔfēi Miào; Map pp248-9), off Wufei Rd, was constructed in the concubines' honour and now sits in a 2000-sq-metre garden park. Note that the real tombs of the concubines are behind Koxinga's shrine and are covered with cement.

Dongyue Temple 東嶽殿

People often come to this **temple** (Dōngyuè Diàn; Map pp248-9; 110 Mincyuan Rd) to communicate with the dead through spiritual mediums. It's a fascinating place to catch a glimpse of Taiwanese folk culture.

The first chamber of the temple holds the city god, Chenghuang; the second, Zizang Wang, the Buddhist king of the underworld; the last, a number of demon gods who rule the underworld.

The disturbing yet fascinatingly grim murals on the walls of the second chamber are as graphic as the depictions of hell by Hieronymus Bosch: there are disembowelments, eye gouging, stabbings, boilings and so much more.

City God Temple 城隍廟

The city god tallies our good and bad deeds in this life, after we die. Hence it is not unusual that his image appears in the Dongyue Temple, dedicated to underworld, nor that these two temples are very close to each other.

When you enter the **City God Temple** (Chéng-huáng Miào; Map pp248-9; 28 Guosheng Rd) you'll see two large abacuses. These are used to calculate if you have done more good than bad in life. Overhead is large sign with a gold inscription that translates roughly as 'You've come at last'.

The pink slips of paper you often see on the altar are from students asking for help to pass an exam. Yep, school is hell everywhere.

ANPING 安平區

After central Tainan, the western Anping (Ānpíng) District has the most interesting concentration of relics and temples. In recent years the area has undergone a dramatic face-lift as part of a NT3 billion plan to revive, restore and recreate the historical district. As in central Tainan, almost all

sights have English signs and there are map boards everywhere.

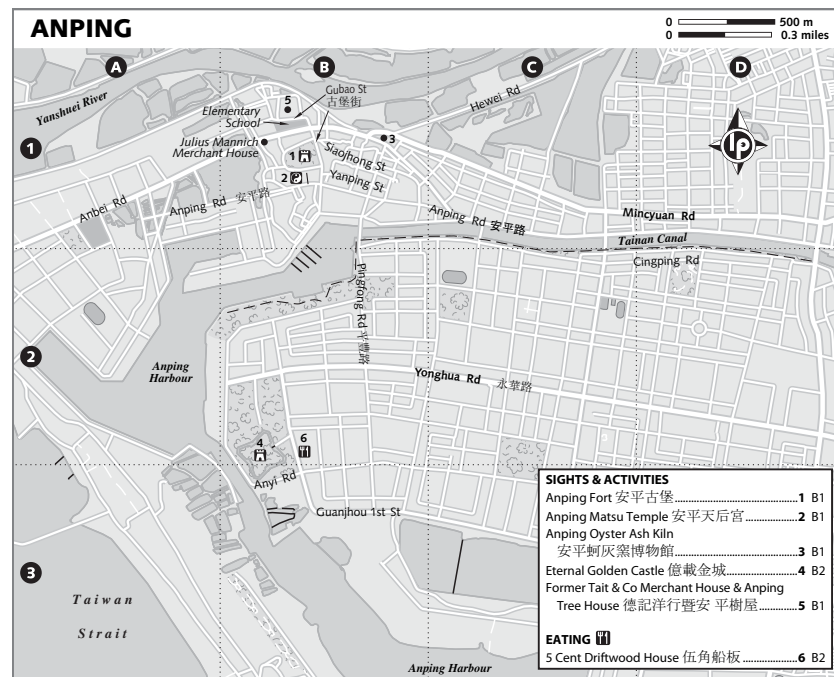
From Chihkan Towers it's only 2km to the start of the canal leading directly to Anping. But if you don't feel like walking, take city bus 2 or weekend tour bus 88 or 99 from the North or South Bus Station.

Anping Fort (Fort Zeelandia) 安平古堡

In 1624 the Dutch seized the area known as Anping to establish a military and commercial base in Taiwan. This **fort** (Ānpíng Gǔbǎo; Map p253; adult/child NT50/25; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) was a stronghold of Dutch power until captured by Koxinga in 1661. Though most of the fort has been reconstructed, it's still an impressive site.

Anping Matsu Temple 安平天后宮

The Matsu Temple (Ānpíng Tiānhòu Gōng; Map p253) in Anping is yet another of the 'first' Matsu temples in Taiwan. But it does genuinely feature what many believe to be the oldest Matsu statue. It's not the one you think (the biggest one in the back shrine), however, but the middle one in the second row of smaller Matsu statues.



Near the altar you can pick up a little packet of 'safe rice' to take home. The packets are designed to keep you and your family safe.

The Former Tait & Co Merchant House and Anping Tree House

德記洋行暨安平樹屋

The **merchant house** (Déjì Yángháng; Map p253; Gubao St; adult/child NT50/25; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) was built by the British in 1867 and now holds a permanent exhibit of household artefacts from the 17th century (donated by the Dutch government). Through a series of decorated rooms, the exhibit highlights the lifestyle of Dutch, Chinese and aboriginal families.

Anping Tree House (Ānpíng Shùwū), on the same grounds as the merchant house, stands out with the large banyan growing in the gutted centre.

Anping Oyster Ash Kiln

安平蚵灰窯博物館

It's generally believed that the Dutch taught the Taiwanese to make a durable brick mortar using crushed oyster shells mixed with sugar water and sticky rice. At one time, oyster-shell kilns (which produced the ground-oyster ash) were a common sight in Tainan. The ruins of this **kiln** (Ānpíng Kē Huīyáo Bówùguǎn; Map p253; Anbei Rd; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-5pm, closed Mon) represent the last of its kind.

The kiln is nothing special to look at but it's still worth a visit to learn more about this little-known industry.

Eternal Golden Castle 億載金城

Like many famous sights around Tainan, this **fort** (Yìzài Jīn Chéng; Map p253; adult/child NT50/25; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) goes by different names: Erkunshen Cannon Fort, Anping Big Cannon Fort and Eternal Golden Castle. The fortress was built in 1876 to shore up Taiwan's defences against the Japanese threat.

Not much remains of the original fortress; oddly, though, the intact arched front gate was built with bricks pilfered from Anping Fort. The reconstructed fort and the cannons make for good photo ops. It's possible now, and recommended, to walk to the castle from the other sights in Anping.

If you are heading to the castle directly from the train station you can catch city bus 14, or tour bus 88 or 99 on the weekend, from the North or South Bus Station.

Walking Tour

The following walking tour covers all of the major temples and sights in central Tainan. You'll have plenty of opportunity to sample local snacks and drinks along the way, so it's best to go on a light or empty stomach. Some people have told us they prefer to do the tour backwards so they can end around the quiet Confucius Temple instead of the busy Chihkan Towers area.

After you've taken in your fill of history and fine writing at the **National Museum of Taiwanese Literature** (1; p251), head south a block to the peaceful **Confucius Temple** (2; p251) on Nanmen Rd. A few blocks south on Nanmen you'll find the martial **Great South Gate** (3; p252) and just east on Shulin a large section of the **old wall** (4; p252) that used to connect with the gate.

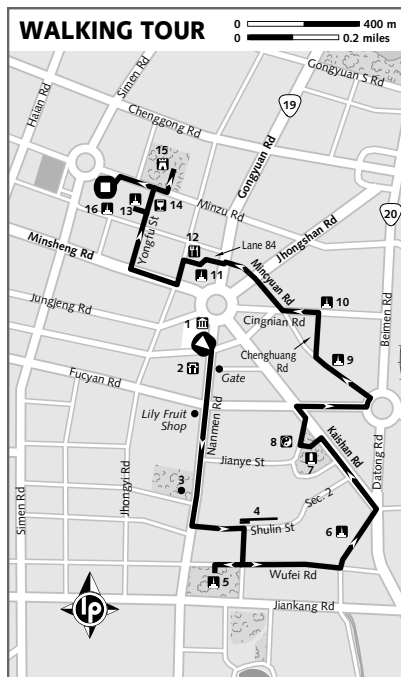
WALK FACTS

Start National Taiwan Museum of Literature

Finish Matsu Temple

Distance 6km

Duration Four to six hours



On Shulin St, take the first right and head down a quiet lane filled with quaint cafés and teahouses. When you reach Wufei St, check out the dainty **Wufei Temple** (5; p252), built to honour the concubines of the last contender for the Ming throne.

Now look for building No 76 on the left as you head east down Wufei St. When you see the number, turn left onto a small lane. Fifty metres on the left you'll see the grounds of the 300-year-old **Fahua Temple** (6). When the temple was first built, the ocean reached the edge of the outer wall.

Continue up the alley until you reach a large intersection. Head north up Kaishan Rd until you see **Koxinga's Shrine** (7; p252) on the left. When you leave the compound, take the back right gate to visit **Lady Linshui's Temple** (8; p252). You'll mostly see women at this elaborate temple, asking for protection for their children from Lady Linshui and her 36 helpers.

Now get back on Kaishan Rd and turn right at the intersection. Head east down Fucyan Rd and then turn left at the big intersection onto Mincyuan Rd. At the **Dongyue Temple** (9; p252) check out the terrifying visions of hell painted on the walls.

Continue up Mincyuan to Chenghuang Rd and turn right. At the end of this short street you'll see the **City God Temple** (10; p253) across the road.

Now head west down Cingnian and then turn right up Mincyuan. Cross Gongyuan and turn left. You'll see a bank and then a small alley. Turn right into the alley to get to the **Altar of Heaven** (11; p251). If you're hungry, consider the seafood at **A Xia Restaurant** (12; p256).

When you leave the alley, it's a quick left and then a right onto Minsheng. A block later, turn right up Yongfu St. Two blocks ahead you'll see the beautiful deep rose-coloured walls of the **Official God of War Temple** (13; p251) on the left and **A Chuan Melon Drink** and **Tainan Kuang Tsai Embroidery Shop** (14; p257 and p257) on the right. Don't miss a gander at the fantabulous works of one of the last masters of embroidery in Tainan.

Now continue to the end of Yongfu St to the **Chihkan Towers** (15; p250). Legend has it that the old well here leads all the way to Anping Fort!

On the opposite side of the street, a tiny alley leads to the **Matsu Temple** (16; p251). Don't forget to check out the door guards and the

roof beam! If you're hungry head back to Chihkan Towers and get something to eat at the nearby stalls.

Festivals & Events

Traditional Chinese holidays such as the Dragon Boat Festival, Lunar New Year and the Lantern Festival are celebrated in a big way in Tainan. See p337 for more about each of these. In addition, the birthdays of the various temple deities – Matsu (the 23rd day of the 3rd lunar month), Confucius (28 September), Lady Linshui – usually feature colourful and lively events at the respective temples.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Tainan City Labour Recreation Centre (Táinánshì Láogōng Yùlèzhōngxīn; Map pp248-9; ☎ 215 0174, ext 6; fax 215 0177; 261 Nanmen Rd; 南門路261號; s/d/tw NT470/570/700) Part of the Youth Guesthouse Network (p328) but anyone can stay here. Rooms are ageing and sheets are threadbare, but it's clean and central and an OK price. There's laundry on the 3rd floor. To get to the centre, take bus 2 from the North or South Bus Station.

Cheng Kuang Hotel (Chéng Guāng Bīnguǎn; Map pp248-9; ☎ 222 1188; 294 Beimen Rd; 北門路294號; d/tw NT650/1000) Rooms are small, simply furnished but well maintained, except for some bathrooms that have mould going black. If this bothers you, ask for another room. This hotel is conveniently close to the train station.

Hann Gong Hotel (Hàngōng Dǎfāndiàn; Map pp248-9; ☎ 226 9115; 199 Zhongshan Rd; 中山路199號; d/tw from NT700/1300) Rooms are nondescript but clean, and the location, near the train station, is good.

Tainan Student Hostel (Táinán Xuéyuàn; Map pp248-9; ☎ 267 0526; cyctnsh@ma15.hinet.net; 1 Lane 300, Funong St, sec.1; 富農街一段300巷1號; d/tw NT1000/1450) The double and twin rooms are pretty plain, and the hostel is a bit out of central Tainan, but it's a good place to stay if you're a young traveller and want to meet young Taiwanese. There's a 15% weekday discount. To get to the hostel it's best to take a taxi first then figure out the bus route back.

MIDRANGE

Confucius Inn (Jiànqiáo Nánshāng Wénwù Huìguǎn; Map pp248-9; 4 Nanmen Rd; 南門路4號; ☎ 214 0033; fax 213 2277; r from NT1800, weekday NT1200, incl breakfast;

☑) Our favourite midrange hotel in Tainan by a Confucian mile. This professionally run hotel, directly south of the Confucius Temple, could easily charge much more. Rooms have a spiffy modern décor, with large comfy beds. Extras like ADSL and laundry service are available, and the hearty Western breakfast is fantastic for a midrange hotel (think fried eggs, bacon wraps, wheat toast, cereal and fruit).

Cambridge Hotel (Jiànqió Dàfāndiàn; Map pp248-9; ☎ 221 9966; 269 Minzu Rd, sec.2; 民族路2段269號; d/tw NT2400/2800; ☑) Run by the same company as the Confucius Inn, the Cambridge is well positioned in the business district and just a stone's throw away from the Chihkan Towers. Facilities include underground parking, a business centre, ADSL in every room and direct service to the Tainan Science Park. Rooms are nicely furnished with modern conveniences and have passed all the latest fire-safety regulations.

Hotel Tainan (Táinán Dàfāndiàn; Map pp248-9; ☎ 228 9101; www.hotel-tainan.com.tw; 1 Chenggong Rd; 成功路1號; d/tw/stc NT3200/3600/4800; ☑) For service and comfort this deserves to be in the top end but we're putting it here to let you know what a good deal it is, especially weekdays when a standard room goes for as low as NT2200. The hotel is a stone's throw from the train station, and about the only negative thing we have to say is that the outside does not do the inside justice. Rooms are comfortably furnished in a modern style and are regularly updated. Rooms also have ADSL. The hotel includes a business centre and health club. The buffet meals at the Jade Room Restaurant (meals NT290 to NT680; open breakfast, lunch and dinner) come highly recommended.

TOP END

Taiyih Landis (Dàiyīlǐ Zhì Jiūdiàn; Map pp248-9; ☎ 213 5555; www.taiyihlandis.com.tw; 600 Simen Rd, sec.1; 西門路1段600號; d/tw/stc incl buffet breakfast NT5800/6200/8800; ☑) The Landis is the only five-star place in town and one of the few hotels in the south deserving of the label. Rooms have an elegant modern décor, with plasma TVs and workstations. The hotel is close to the new upmarket Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Department Store, as well as a number of cultural attractions, and has its own top-notch food and beverage outlets. Package deals for two usually run at NT4000 a night.

Eating

For simple inexpensive noodle, rice and Japanese fast-food outlets, check out the area around Vie Show Cinemas, or behind the train station (the student area). For traditional food you can't beat the area around Chihkan Towers in the evenings. Look for *dànzi miàn* (擔仔麵; noodles with a tangy meat sauce), *guāncái bān* (棺材板; coffin cake), and *hǎixiān zhōu* (海鮮粥; seafood congee).

The old street directly east of the Confucius Temple (through the gate) has turned into a pleasant pedestrian-only area with a dozen or more cafés and small restaurants. If you're hungry, you'll find something here.

CENTRAL TAINAN

Chi Kín Dandanman (Chí Kàn Dāndānmàn; Map pp248-9; 180 Minzu St, sec.2; dishes NT40; ☎ 24hr) This is a fun place to try traditional *dànzi miàn* as the restaurant is set in a Japanese-era merchant's house. *Dànzi miàn* means 'two baskets and a stick' and refers to the baskets used to carry the noodles around for sale. The dish is a simple, refreshing mix of noodles with a tangy meat sauce. This shop uses no MSG.

Lily Fruit Shop (Map pp248-9; ☎ 213 7522; 199 Fucyan Rd, sec.2; ☎ 11am-11pm, closed 2 Mondays per month) Across from the Confucius Temple is this well-known shop, serving delicious *bào bing* (刨冰; shaved iced and fruit; NT50) and fruit drinks.

Yu Shen Restaurant (Yōuxiān Sùshì Xīcān; Map pp248-9; ☎ 214 1180; Chinghong St; dishes NT120-200; ☎ 11am-10pm) A popular vegetarian restaurant serving à la carte dishes. On a street with many quaint teahouses and cafés.

Green House (Map pp248-9; ☎ 224 4474; 3F, 21 Lane 196, Fucyan Rd, sec.1; dishes from NT150; ☎ 10am-10pm) A long-running Western restaurant with a casual vibe, especially on the rooftop. Dishes include pasta, hamburgers and Mexican, and there are large, filling sandwiches (NT90 takeaway).

A Xia Restaurant (À Xiá Fāndiàn; Map pp248-9; ☎ 221 9873; 7 Lane 84, Zhongyi Rd, sec.2; dishes NT500-700) A popular seafood restaurant serving the freshest seafood in Tainan, now sporting a modern look. It's popular for weddings and other celebrations.

ANPING

The area close to Fort Anping is also well known for its local foods. It's fine during the day but we find the night market rather

grubby and messy. Some snacks to look out for include *xiājuǎn* (蝦捲; shrimp rolls) and *yúwán tāng* (魚丸湯; fish ball soup).

5 Cent Driftwood House (Wǔjiǎo Chuánbǎn; Map p253; ☎ 2999 3321; 88 Guangjhou Rd; 9-course set meal NT500-700) This is one place that you should at least have a gander at. It's across from the Eternal Golden Castle. Designed by an artist from Tainan County, who had no previous background in architecture, the house will strike you as either daring, original and awesome, or proof that people should stick to their field of expertise. The house is made from driftwood, railway ties, brick, stone, glass and other natural materials. It's massive inside, with an open interior fed with natural light. The outside is indescribable, though if we had to describe it we'd say it looks like a castle battling cancer. If this sounds harsh it isn't meant to be. The restaurant is a quirky, idiosyncratic work of love and we quite like it just the way it is.

Drinking

There are cafés and teahouses all around Tainan. One street with many pleasant options to try is Chinghong St (慶中街), just south of the Nanmen City Wall on the way to Wufei Temple. For the latest pubs and cafés check out the *FYI South Magazine* listings.

A Chuan Melon Drink (À Chuān Dōngguāchā; Map pp248-9; 212 Yongfu Rd, sec.2; drinks from NT15; ☎ 9am-10pm) This well-known melon-drink stand is just across from the God of War Temple and often has people lining up for a beverage.

A few staples of the bar scene include **Armory Pub** (Map pp248-9; ☎ 226 9520; http://armorypub.net; 82 Gongyuan 5 Rd; drinks from NT120; ☎ 8pm-5am) and **Willy's Second Base** (Wēilǐ Èrlèi Jiǔbā; Map pp248-9; ☎ 291 1050; 321 Jiankang Rd, sec.3; drinks from NT120; ☎ 6.30pm-late, closed Mon). Note that both places serve meals and the Armory has a decent range of vegetarian options.

Entertainment

Vie Show Cinemas (Huánà Wēixiù Yǐngchéng; Map pp248-9; ☎ 600 5566; www.warnervillage.com.tw in Chinese; 8th fl, 60 Gongyuan Rd; adult/child NT240/240) You can book tickets online in English.

Shopping

Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Department Store (Táinán Xīntiāndì Xīnguāng Sānyuè; Map pp248-9; 658 Simen Rd, sec.1) Most older locals remember the days

when this location housed a prison and execution room, and not an upscale mall.

Shuang Chun Chang Shoes (Shuāng Quān Chāng Xiéháng; Map pp248-9; 316 Simen Rd, sec.2; ☎ 9am-10.30pm) For something traditional, check out the cute *mùjī* (wood slippers) at this old shop near the Matsu Temple.

Tainan Kuang Tsai Embroidery Shop (Guāngcǎi Shòu Zhuāng; Map pp248-9; ☎ 227 1253; 186-3 Yongfu Rd, sec.2) Across from one treasure of Tainan, the War God Temple, is this other; Mr Lin, one of the last remaining embroidery masters in Tainan. Mr Lin has been working at his craft since he was 16 (he's in his late 60s now) and in recent years has taken embroidery to a new, modern level. All his pieces have the light touch and expressiveness of a craftsman truly at the peak of his skills. The most famous and expensive samples of his work are the long Eight Immortals panels, which used to be popular at weddings and other special occasions. Such panels cost tens of thousands of Taiwanese dollars but this doesn't stop buyers from all over the world coming to the shop. For the less extravagant, smaller pieces can be purchased for a few thousand, and even browsers are more than welcome, as the sign outside the shop reads.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are flights from Tainan to Taipei and Kinmen. **Far Eastern Air Transport** (☎ 260 1271), **Uni Air** (☎ 260 3683) and **Transasia Airways** (☎ 260 1273) have reservation counters in **Tainan Airport** (www.tna.gov.tw). There's a **visitor centre** (☎ 335 9209; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) at the airport with English-speaking staff who can help you with all your needs. There's also an ATM at the airport and a car-hire agency.

BUS

Buses to Taipei (NT500, five to six hours, every hour) leave from the **UBus Station** (Map pp248-9; ☎ 226 8108; 2 Beinan Rd) to the left of the train station. Buses also leave from a host of other bus stations to the right down Beinan Rd. Note that if you catch the UBUS between midnight and 6am the fare is only NT260.

TRAIN

Tainan is a major stop on the Western Line. Trains to/from Taipei (fast/slow train

NT741/476, four/5½ hours) and Kaohsiung (fast/slow train NT107/50, 30 minutes/one hour) run every half hour from 5am to midnight.

The High-Speed Rail (HSR; NT1450, two hours) runs trains about every hour between Taipei to Tainan. Note the station is about 30 to 40 minutes south of the city centre.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT & HIGH-SPEED RAIL (HSR)

Bus 5 to the airport leaves from the South Bus Station (NT18, 20 minutes, every hour). Buses to the HSR leave from the North Bus Station (NT40, 40 minutes, every hour).

BUS

City Bus

Tainan's city bus system (<http://ebus.tncc.gov.tw>) is pretty good and covers a wide area. Basic fares are NT18 and most buses run every 15 to 30 minutes. Note that the hub is across from the train station and there are two stations: North Bus Station and South Bus Station. Most city buses stop at either station, as do the tourist buses.

Tourist Bus

On the weekends, two tour buses (day pass NT60, every 30 minutes from 8.30am to 6pm) run to all the major sights. Bus 88 covers the cultural sights while bus 99 covers natural attractions including the Black-faced Spoonbill Reserve (right). Go to the train station visitor centre to purchase a ticket and a map of all the stops (it's in Chinese but the staff can help translate it).

SCOOTER

With an international driving licence you can rent scooters from several shops behind the train station for NT200 per day.

AROUND TAINAN

Taiwan Salt Museum (台灣鹽博物館; *Taiwān Yén Bówùguǎn*; 69 Yencheng Village, Cigu Township; adult/child NT100/80; ☎ 9am-5pm, closed 3rd Wed every month) is not a must-see, but if you are in the area do drop by. The 1st floor has English signs, and there are several movies to watch, including one about the back-faced spoonbill (see right). The 2nd-floor display of salt crystals from around the world is fascinating. We had no idea there was so much variety. Next

to the museum are several **salt mountains** (admission NT50; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Sat & Sun) that look just like giant mounds of snow (there is a Santa and reindeer on display). Kids can climb and even slide down in places (where the salt has not hardened). To get to the museum and mountain head north up Hwy 17 from Tainan and look for the English signs.

The **Black-Faced Spoonbill Reserve** (黑面琵鷺野生動物保護區; *Hēimiàn Pílù Yěshēng Dòngwù Bǎohùqū*; ☎ 06-786 1000; Cigu Township) is a small section of wetlands on the west coast of Tainan County dedicated to protecting the extremely rare black-faced spoonbill. The bird, which gets its name from its comically long black bill, spends summer (May to September) in Korea and northern China and migrates to Tainan County for the winter. Once down to just a few hundred, the species now has closer to two thousand, though this is still tiny and the bird's future is by no means assured. If you visit the reserve you won't be able to see the birds up close but there are high-powered binoculars you can use for free. To get to the reserve drive north up Hwy 17 from Tainan or take tourist shuttle bus 99 from the hub across from the Tainan train station. For more information check out the website of the **Black-faced Spoonbill Conservation Association** (<http://mail.tnssh.tn.edu.tw/~bfsa/en/index.html>).

The majority of people in Tainan County worship Wang Yeh, who is both a Taoist god and a brother of the first emperor. **Nankunshen Temple** (南鯤身代天府; *Nánkūnshēn Dàitiān Fū*) is the oldest (established 1662) and most important Wang Yeh temple in the county. It's also a beautiful structure and larger than anything you'll find in Tainan City. On most Sundays the temple atmosphere explodes with exuberant displays of ritual devotion: there are fireworks, parades, chanting and, occasionally, self-mutilation. If possible, try to visit during the **Welcoming Festival for Wang Yeh** (20 April, lunar calendar) or the **Birthday of Wutzu-yeh** (10 September, lunar calendar). Buses to Nankunshen (NT121, 40 minutes, every hour) leave Tainan City from the Hsingnan bus station on Jhongshan Rd.

The **Baihe Lotus Festival** (白河蓮花季; *Báihé Liánhuā Jì*), in northern Tainan County, celebrates the blooming of the lotus flower. The two-month-long festival includes cycling tours through lotus fields, seed-shucking con-

YENSHUI FIREWORKS FESTIVAL 鹽水蜂炮

There may be nothing stranger in this land than the annual **Yenshui Fireworks Festival** (*Yénshuǐ Fēngpào*) – or battle, or blowout – in which thousands of people place themselves willingly in the melee of exploding fireworks. Officially, the festival re-enacts the time when the people of Yenshui turned to Kuan Kong, the god of war and righteousness, to save them from a terrible epidemic.

It was 1875, and cholera was killing off the town; nothing known to man was helping. In desperation, people began to parade their gods through the town and set off noisy and smoky firecrackers to scare away evil disease-spreading spirits.

For the older generation, the current Yenshui festival still honours the old event, but for the younger crowd it's an opportunity to live life on the edge. Crowds of 100,000 or more can gather. It's hot, smoky, and tense, very tense. When a nearby 'beehive' is set off, thousands of bottle rockets fly at you and over you (though hopefully not through you). The noise deafens, the smoke blinds, and the rockets sting.

Some people travel from overseas every year to be part of the excitement. Tens of thousands more come in from all parts of Taiwan. Accidents, burns and lost eyes are all common, though most try to mitigate damage by wearing protective clothing. A motorcycle helmet is considered mandatory, as is thick, nonflammable clothing and earplugs. Many people also wrap a towel around their neck to prevent fireworks from flying up under their helmet.

If you're injured you should be able to find medical help nearby, but don't expect any sympathy. And certainly don't expect any compensation. You participate at your own risk.

The festival is getting bigger and bigger each year and more activities are being added to draw in the crowds. In 2007 a 14km-long chain of firecrackers was lit, breaking the Guinness record by 2km. The chain took 45 minutes to completely burn up.

Yenshui is in the north of Tainan County. You can reach the town by taking an express train to nearby Sinying and then a taxi. Be prepared to be out all night if you go, and take care of your valuables. The festival happens every year during Lantern Festival, two weeks after Chinese New Year.

For more information, and some fantastic footage, check out the website of an amateur New York filmmaker who was doing a documentary of the event at the time of writing (<http://homepage.mac.com/gjchin>).

tests and photographic competitions. This is your chance to see what a country fair is like, Taiwanese style. The festival is held in July and August. The place to stay here is **Ama's Scenic Guesthouse** (阿嬤的家; ☎ 06-687 6899; fax 687 6531; Baihe Town; d/tw 2000/2400, with Youth Guesthouse card NT1500), but you better book early if you want a room. The guesthouse is set in the middle of lotus fields and every morning visitors are taken out on bikes to watch the lotus blossoms unfold. Note that except for during the festival times there is little reason to come to the area.

GUANZILING (KUANZILING) 關子嶺

☎ 06 / pop 2000

This small hot-spring village (Guanziling) in northern Tainan County is famous for an old temple (now finally repaired and open to the public) and two geological oddities. The first oddity concerns the hot-spring water itself,

which is a light grey 'mud' colour owing to the heavy mineral content. The second oddity is a cave where natural-gas flames burn continuously on top of a small pool of spring water. Either is a good reason to plan a day trip from Tainan or Chiayi.

Orientation & Information

The Guanziling area is essentially one long dip off County Rd 172 on County Rd 96. The village, on the eastern end of the dip, is divided into lower and upper sections. There's a big, new park with stone steps at the back joining the two sections. Buses to Guanziling pull in here to turn around. The lower village is the older part of town. It's not that pleasant through here as many of the buildings are shabby and the hot-spring owners send tourists to drive you into their establishment as if you are cattle. There's an ATM in the 7-Eleven in the lower village.

Sights & Activities

WATER & FIRE MIX 水火同源

In a small **grotto** (Shūihuó Tóng Yuán; admission free; ☎ 24hr), west of the hot-spring area, fire and water really do mix as natural gas from far underground bubbles up through a pool of water and ignites as it hits the surface air. The result is a surreal dance of flames atop pure water. The grotto is in a small park across from a park. It's a popular sight in Guanziling so it would be hard to miss it.

The flames are not as high as they were when we wrote the last edition, though then they were higher than the previous edition so it seems the intensity of the natural gas flow varies from year to year. Still, we have never seen the flames less than a metre high. If possible, try to visit the area at night.

BIYUN TEMPLE 碧雲寺

This Ming-dynasty-era temple (Biyún Sì) is dedicated to Guanyin, the goddess of mercy. It's a small affair, but rich in excellent wall relief, and colourful Chochin-style carvings.

HOT SPRINGS

Guanziling's mud hot springs were opened during the Japanese era, and have always been considered therapeutic. The town is now catching up on the hot-spring craze, and more and more hotels are being built. Most of these are attractive modern-style hotels with excellent facilities, but we do hope that the place can resist overdevelopment.

Maple Hot Spring Cottage (紅葉溫泉度假山莊; Hóngyè Wēnquán Dūjià Shānzhuāng; ☎ 682 2821; unlimited use of public pools adult/child NT450/200; ☎ 10am-10pm) has modern outdoor public pools set in a valley off the main road. To get here, walk up from the park where the bus turns around (the park between the upper and lower sections of the village). On the right you'll see a café perched on the side of the hill. You can buy tickets here for the pools below.

There are also pleasant cottages (doubles from NT2880) across from the outdoor pools on the side of a hill.

King's Garden Villa (景大渡假莊園; Jǐngdà Dūjià Zhuāngyuán; ☎ 682 2500; www.myspa.com.tw in Chinese; unlimited use of public pools adult/child NT450/200; ☎ 9am-10pm) is another modern hot-spring resort, with 15 distinctive pools in the spa. There's a range of accommodation styles, from cottages with their own walled-in compound and outdoor springs (NT7600) to rooms

(from NT4200) with hot-spring tubs inside. Though these looked great on the surface we found a few rooms had pretty shoddy construction (eg sinking floors).

Eating & Drinking

There are plenty of cafés and restaurants around Guanziling. Across from the bus stop sit a row of barbecue stalls, though these usually serve group-size portions. Most of the hotels have restaurants and decent set meals can be had for around NT200.

Getting There & Around

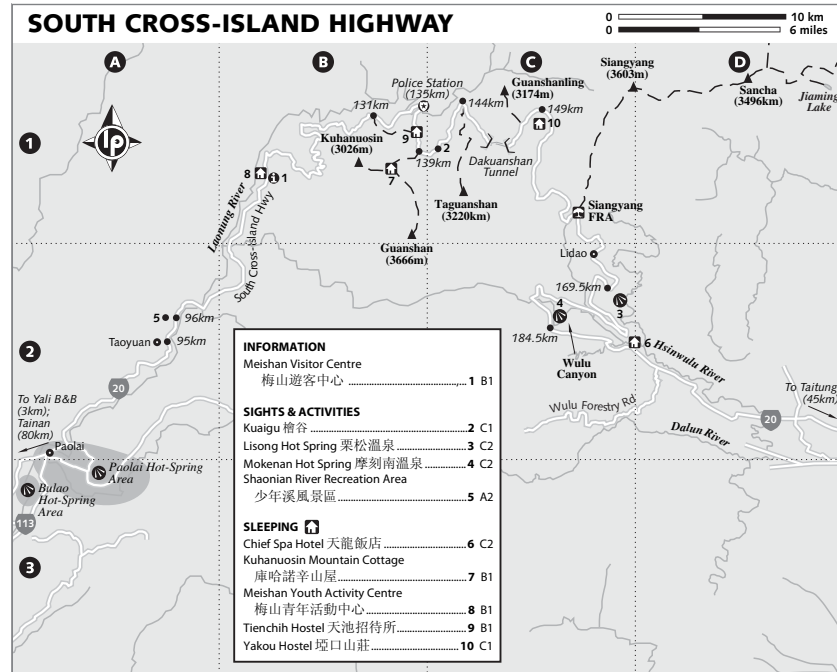
It's best to take your own transport here (scooters are only NT200 per day in nearby Chiayi) but if you can't, take a bus (NT79, one hour, every 30 minutes) from the Chiayi Bus Company station in Chiayi. Buses stop at Biyun Temple first, then continue to Guanziling. Get off the bus in the new park.

SOUTH CROSS-ISLAND HWY 南部橫貫公路

A friend once said that the South Cross-Island Hwy (南部橫貫公路; Nánbù Héngguàn Gōnglù) perfectly illustrates the principle that 'sometimes the journey matters more than the destination'. With all due respect, we think he needs to get out of his car more often.

The highway bisects southern Taiwan, running from Tainan in the west to Taitung in the east. It passes through the southern section of the Central Mountain Range, skirting the bottom of Yushan National Park. The area is sparsely developed, scenically grand, and blessed with easily accessible old forests, aboriginal villages, fantastic hikes both long and short, and numerous hot springs, including Lisong, which many consider the most beautiful natural spring in Taiwan.

Be aware that, as with all mountain routes in Taiwan, parts of the high, narrow road are frequently washed away during landslides, and falling rocks are all too common. Don't go after heavy rains or earthquakes. The safest time to visit is in winter, during the dry season. Afternoon fog is a hazard year-round, especially around Yakou: plan to be off the road, or trail, by 3pm or so. Hiking conditions are best October to



March when it's cool, even cold, but dry. Traffic is very light during this time too, especially midweek.

Information

There's a Yushan National Park **visitor centre** (☎ 07-686 6181; ☎ 9am-4.30pm, closed Mon following 2nd & 4th Sun of every month, if these are national holidays, closed Tue) in Meishankou for maps and general information on most of the eastern section of the highway. Hikers who wish to climb Guanshan can apply for permits here for a climb the same day.

Getting There & Around

You can of course start the highway from either end but if you are riding a bike, or walking, west to east is best. With a car or scooter it doesn't matter, though west to east just seems the better route. The long, scenic drive downhill through the Wulu gorge and out into the rift valley is a very satisfying conclusion. Similarly, if you are hiring scooters, Tainan is your best option as hire shops accept international driving licences while those in Taitung do not.

With public transportation it's a different story. The **Hsingnan Motor Transport Company** (☎ 06-265 3121) runs four buses daily from Tainan to Meishankou (NT319, six hours, first bus 7am). In Taitung, the **Kuo Kuang Hao Bus Company** (☎ 089-322027) runs one bus a day to Tienchih (NT351, 4½ hours). It leaves at 7.10am, but always confirm this time as some schedules (even the one at the bus station) still say it leaves at 6.40am.

Unfortunately this means that the 27km stretch between Meishankou and Tienchih has no public transportation. It's possible to hire someone in Meishankou to give you a ride, but it won't be cheap. You could walk, but if you don't have so many days take the bus from Taitung to Tienchih and start your journey east from here. Meishankou has little of interest anyway and you can always see Paolai and Taoyuan when you visit Maolin.

PAOLAI 寶來

☎ 07 / pop 600

The town of Paolai (Bǎolái) is considered the gateway to the South Cross-Island Hwy, which is appropriate because right here, at

WALKING THE SOUTH CROSS-ISLAND HIGHWAY

- Day one: take the bus from **Taitung** (p202) to the **Guanshan** (opposite) trailhead. Climb to **Kuhanuosin Mountain Cottage** (opposite) and stay the night.
- Day two: complete the hike to the Guanshan summit, then return to the highway and walk 3km north to spend the night at **Tienchih Hostel** (opposite).
- Day three: walk 13km along the highway to **Yakou** (opposite), with a possible side trip up **Taguanshan** (opposite). Spend the night in **Yakou Hostel** (p264).
- Day four: hike up **Guanshanling Mountain** (opposite), then take the afternoon bus to **Motian** (p264). Hike down the side road to **Lisong Hot Spring** (p264) and spend the night camped by the river.
- Day five: hike back up to the highway and walk 10km to **Lidao** (p264), then 7km to 8km or catch the afternoon bus to **Wulu** (p264). Spend the night in the Chief Spa Hotel or camped out in the hills.
- Day six: explore **Wulu Canyon** (p264) and wild **Mokenan Hot Spring** (p265). Take the afternoon bus down to Taitung.

the start, are hot springs and the opportunity for adventure in the form of rafting down the Laonong River.

The **Laonong River** (老濃溪; Lǎonóng Xī) begins on the slopes of Yushan and the rafting (*fānzhōu*) traverses 20km of rough water (much rougher than the Siougukuan River in Taitung) from Paolai to Sinfā. A trip costs about NT800 including lunch and transportation. For more information, and online reservations, check out www.rafting.com.tw/index1-1.htm. Or contact the **Laonong Whitewater Rafting Company** (105 Jhongjheng Rd, Paolai Village, ☎ 07-688 2996; fax 07-688 2997).

Paolai has bicarbonate water, with a pH of about 7.5, and temperature about 60°C. If you have your own vehicle, and love hot springs and scenic landscapes, it is worth exploring this area for a day or two. About 6km south of Paolai on county road 133 is the **Bulao Hot Spring** (不老溫泉; Bùlǎo Wēnquán), a low-alkaline carbonic-acid spring. There are some lovely hotels along the road, many with great open views over the Laonong River valley.

Hot-spring hotels are reasonably priced in the Paolai area (NT2500 to NT4000 a night with good midweek discounts) and if you just want a soak it will cost around NT300 per person.

For something a little homier we recommend a little aboriginal family-run place a few kilometres before Paolai called **Yali B&B** (亞力民宿; Yǎlì Mínsù; ☎ 688 2042; www.travel-web.com.tw in Chinese; with Youth Guesthouse card

s/d/tw NT600/1500/2400). The family are very kind-hearted, and the mother is simply a wacky riot at times. Rooms (each one is named after a member of the family) are simple but good value for money and are decorated with little handmade articles. ('No money,' the mother kept repeating when we were there, 'so we have to make our own decorations.') Guests can learn how to make bamboo chopsticks, and also enjoy a swim in a natural spring-fed pool (not a hot spring) next door. If you plan to stay a night, bring your own towels and toiletries. There is a 20% weekday discount. To get to the guesthouse turn left just past the 77km mark on Hwy 20 into **Jianshan Village** (建山村; estimated population 100) and head up the road 1km. If you are taking the bus from Tainan the stop is just before the turn-off for Jianshan Village.

TAOYUAN TOWNSHIP

North of Paolai, the Taoyuan township area has an abundance of undeveloped hot springs (we only touch on a couple) and rivers for swimming.

At the 96km mark on the highway you'll see a sign for the **Shaoan River Recreation Area** (Xiàonián Xī Fōngjǐng Qū). There's an interesting waterfall here and free hot-spring pools set up by the local community. The falls are visible across the river from the parking lot and can be reached by crossing the suspension bridge. To get to the hot springs, turn right after the suspension bridge and follow the road up and then left, over the falls. It's about

a 20-minute walk and the way is pretty obvious. You can camp in the recreation area.

MEISHANKOU (MEISHAN) 梅山口

☎ 07 / pop 200

The next stop on the road is the tiny village of Meishan (Meishankou usually refers to the visitor centre area), home of the Bunun aboriginal tribe. Note that this is the last stop on the bus from Tainan, and the last gas station for 100km is just up the road. There's a **visitor centre** (☎ 07-686 6181; ☎ 9am-4.30pm, closed Mon following 2nd & 4th Sun of every month, if these are national holidays, closed Tue) just off the highway to the right.

The **Meishankou Youth Activity Centre** (Měishān Qīngnián Huódòng Zhōngxīn; ☎ 686 6166; d incl breakfast NT2400, 4-person tatami r incl breakfast NT3200) is the only hotel in town. It's a very quiet, relaxing place, and makes for a good base if you are exploring the area with your own transportation. Lunch and dinner are extra.

TIENTCHIH 天池

The 27km no-man's (or no-bus's) land from Meishankou to Tienchih (Tiānchí; elevation 2280m) is blessed with dramatic mountain vistas, and if you have to walk it, you certainly won't hurt for things to look at.

Note that Tienchih is not a town, or even village, but a forestry department outpost with a police station just up the road. The only place to stay is at the minimalist **Tienchih Hostel** (Tiānchí Zhāodàisù; ☎ 07-678 0006; dm NT300). There are no meals available, though there is a kitchen, so bring supplies with you.

Activities

Tienchih is a great starting point for a number of hikes and is an ideal spot for beginning a multiday journey (walking or otherwise) down the highway.

HIKING

Jhongjhiguan 中之關

The trail (Zhōngzhiguān), also known as the Guanshan Historic Trail, begins a few kilometres west of Tienchih at the 131km mark on the highway, and ends just up from the hostel at the 136km mark. The trail was built by the Japanese to control the Bunun tribe, and the 3.5km section that is open to the public now takes two or three hours to complete one way. Most people who hike it take the trail one way and the road the other.

Guanshan 關山

The clearly marked trailhead for Guanshan (Guānshān; 3666m) is at the 139km mark, or just 3km south of Tienchih. Permits are needed to climb the mountain and can be applied for in Meishankou at the visitor centre. The Yushan National Park's board considers Guanshan a very basic climb, despite being over 3000m, so applying in advance is usually unnecessary. However, if you plan to go on a weekend you should apply in advance (see p329) as there are limited beds in the cabin.

The hike takes two days (though really fit people can climb up and down in a day). It's a few hours climb to **Kuhanuosin Mountain Cottage** (Kùhānuòxīn Shānwū), a rough cabin at 3026m where you can leave your heavy bag and tackle nearby **Kuhanuosin Mountain** (elevation 3206m). The next morning, climb to the summit of Guanshan, return to the cabin, and head back to Tienchih. Note that there is a stream for water at the trailhead to Guanshan, and tanks that hold rainwater at the cabin (but confirm the latter before you head out).

The next day (or any day for that matter), it is possible to walk 13km to Yakou, the next pit stop with food and accommodation. Along the way the highway passes through an area called **Kuaignu** (Cypress Valley; Kuàigǔ), a gorgeous stretch of giant ancient trees that is worth taking in at a leisurely pace. At the 144km mark is the clearly marked trailhead for **Taguanshan** (Da-guānshān; 大關山; Dàguānshān). The steep trail takes a few hours to complete and takes you through an enchanting old-growth forest. Much of this forest is within the first 15 minutes of the hike, so do explore the trail a bit even if you can't do it all.

YAKOU 壩口

Yakou (Yǎkǒu) is the halfway point along the highway. The scenery is dominated by high mountain ridges and sharp valleys (that is if you can see any of it through the thick fog). Right before Yakou is the 600m **Dakuanshan Tunnel** (大關山隧道; Dàguānshān Sùidào), the dividing line between Taitung and Kaohsiung Counties.

Just east of the Dakuanshan Tunnel is the trail to **Guanshanling Mountain** (關山嶺山; Guānshānlǐng Shān). It's three to four hours return with excellent views from the flat top

if the weather is clear (go early morning for best results).

Travellers can stay in the **Yakou Hostel** (Yákóu Shānzhūàng; dm NT600, 4-person tatami r NT2400) just off the highway down a side road at the 149km mark. It's cold up here and the rooms have no heat but it's much more comfortable than at Tienchih. Fairly decent meals (NT120) are prepared by the hostel but must be ordered in advance. The front desk has a small selection of snacks and drinks for sale. Note that rooms must be booked through the **Meishan Youth Activity Centre** (☎ 07-686 6166).

SIANGYANG FOREST RECREATION AREA 向陽森林遊樂區

From Yakou you can continue walking on the highway 8km to this new forest recreation area (Xiàngyáng Sēnlín Yóulè Qū) with several short trails through beautiful cypress and pine forests. There's a **visitor centre** (☎ 089-345 493; http://taitung.forest.gov.tw; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm) at the start of the reserve just off the highway. Note it does not sell any food or drinks.

Siangyang is starting to become known as a prime bird-watching area and is also the start of the three-day round-trip trek to **Jiaming Lake** (嘉明湖; Jiámíng Hú), a tiny alpine lake that resulted from an asteroid collision ages ago. Those who have done the route rave that the scenery is about the best in Taiwan. The Jiaming Lake trail is part of the National Trail System (p329). Only a police permit is required to hike it.

LISONG HOT SPRING 栗松溫泉

Arguably the most beautiful natural hot springs in Taiwan, Lisong (Lisōng Wēnquán) is a must-visit for any lover of the sublime in nature. At the base of a deep river valley, eons of mineral deposits have painted a small limestone grotto shades of deep green, white, red and black. Steam rises from the rocks, and hot-spring water bubbles, spits and streams from fissures and cracks in the canyon walls. Stand in the right place and you are in a hot-spring shower. It really is as good as it sounds.

If Lisong wasn't already well known among Taiwanese hot-spring fans, we'd probably keep it a secret. Fortunately, the remoteness of the spring and the very steep trail down keep it from being wrecked by crowds. In fact, on a weekday you likely won't see another soul. We never have.

To get to Lisong look for a metal shack around the 169.5km mark, near the village of **Motian** (摩天). Take the farm road behind the shack down about 1.5km to the end. (You can drive it but it's pretty rough and steep.) Turn right across a farmer's field and look for the trailhead on the other side. It's pretty much straight down from here and there are many sections where you must use ropes (already in place) to assist you. When you reach the river, cross and head up the bank 30m then cross back using the rope in place. Scramble up the bank to the now obvious springs. People have made a small pool out of rocks and you can dip into the deep pools of the Lidao River when you get too hot.

If you walk in from the highway, it will take 1½ to two hours to reach the springs. Since the turn-off for the springs is about 20km from Yakou, you could easily walk from there and camp overnight by the river.

LITAO 利稻

pop 300

From Lisong Hot Spring it's about 8km to 9km to the small aboriginal village of Litao (Lidào), where you can get food and drinks and catch the afternoon bus to Wulu or onwards to Taitung.

The Litao Hotel, run by the Meishan Youth Activity Centre, has closed but there are numerous inexpensive homestays. These tend to go in and out of business, not to mention up and down in quality, so ask around or show the characters for *minsù* (民宿).

If you are looking for a bit more comfort, continue another 7km to 8km (about two hours' walk) to Wulu.

WULU 霧鹿

pop 100

The last real stop on the highway, Wulu (Wùlù), like Paolai, the first, offers hot springs galore (both wild and developed), bird-watching, hiking and a rushing river. There's no rafting here but you can enjoy the beautiful Wulu Gorge as you walk or drive along the road.

Sights & Activities

WULU GORGE

This deep, twisting **canyon** (Wùlù Xiágǔ) runs beside the highway for the last stretch before opening out into the East Rift Valley. It's scenic enough on its own, but there are also about

a dozen wild hot springs to explore along the canyon floor. It's tough getting down to the bottom, though, so watch out for paths or temporary access roads built by road crews. There are also a few suspension bridges if you want a good viewpoint for photos.

HOT SPRINGS

There are dozens of natural hot springs along the South Cross-Island Hwy, some requiring half a day to hike into. Around Wulu, however, there are several that can be reached fairly easily. One of the most wild is the **Mokenan Hot Spring** (Mókè'nán Wēnquán). In this large open area of steamy fumaroles, and long cliff faces stained with colourful mineral deposits, hot-spring water spits dribbles and boils out from cracks in the canyon walls.

To get here, look for a clearing wide enough to park a car or two on the left side of the highway just before the 184.5km mark as you head down (east). You should see a tag on the bushes. Look for a trail on the right side of the clearing. It's steep, very steep, going down, so take care. Wear river-tracing, or rock-climbing, shoes for better grip.

At the bottom, scramble down the final rocks and cross the river. (Don't attempt when the water is high after heavy rain.) Then, explore.

Wulu's water has a pH of about 7.5 and is odourless and silky to the touch. It is, in fact, almost identical to the water at Taian, our favourite hot spring in Taiwan. We've seen pictures of people soaking in contrived pools at Mokenan but you'd better make sure you mix the hot spring water with cooler river water first.

For something a little more refined, check out the nearby **Chief Spa Hotel** (Tiānlóng Fāndiàn; ☎ 089-935 075; www.chiefspa.com.tw). If the hotel is not busy, nonguests can use the outdoor pools (NT300) that look out onto the canyon. Comfortable rooms (single/double NT3000/3600) with piped-in hot spring water are also available, and there's a 30% discount Sunday to Friday. Audrey, the manager, speaks fluent English and is a great source of local information.

HIKING

Behind the Chief Spa Hotel, the **Heavenly Dragon Bridge** (Tiānlóng Diào Qiáo) spans

the gorge. It's the longest suspension bridge in the east of Taiwan and an obligatory visit for most tour buses.

On the other side of the bridge, a clear **trail** allows for a pleasant 1½-hour walk through lush forests, with expansive views over the canyon.

BIRD-WATCHING

Organized tours from North America and Europe have in recent years started coming to the Wulu area for bird-watching, especially on the lookout for endemic species like the Taiwan partridge, mikado pheasant and rusty laughing thrush. While the trail on the other side of the Heavenly Dragon Bridge seemed to our eyes to team with birds, it is a nearby forestry road that is the real draw.

The **Wulu Forestry Road** (霧鹿林道) starts a few kilometres east of the Chief Spa Hotel but you need to drive up about 15km to the best bird-watching spots. And for this you really need a 4WD vehicle.

Eating

Across from the Chief Spa Hotel sits a little **Sichuan restaurant** (Sichuān Fāndiàn; dishes NT60), where you can fill up on fried noodles and tofu with chilli at any time of the day. The Chief Spa Hotel has excellent aboriginal food prepared by Bunun cooks.

KAOHSIUNG TO KENTING

KAOHSIUNG CITY 高雄市

☎ 07 / pop 1,512,677

In the last edition of the Taiwan guidebook, we called Kaohsiung not a must-see, but a city to keep your eye on. Well, no-one is more surprised than we are at how quickly the change has come.

In some ways of course this is because Kaohsiung, Taiwan's second-largest city, and largest port (the fourth- or fifth-largest in the world), was so sorely and long neglected. Like the double-digit growth of many developing countries, Kaohsiung's transformation seems astonishing in part because it has so much catching-up to do.

We wouldn't be thrilled about the change if Kaohsiung didn't have something worth transforming. But it does. The harbour, the

beaches, the Love River, the historical sights, and the 1000 hectares of almost-pristine forest have of course always been there. It finally took someone with a good vision to see their true worth.

The visionary in many ways was former Mayor Frank Hsieh. He saw the Love River cleaned up, and its banks turned into lovely promenades. He also saw the city get potable water for the first time, oversaw the start of an extensive MRT system (though he was tainted with a scandal on that matter), the opening of the harbour to tourism, and even scored the 2009 World Games. The city is proud to be hosting the games, the second-largest sporting event after the Olympics. And like many Olympic-bid-winning cities, Kaohsiung is using

the honour to push through even more urban renewal projects.

Orientation

Kaohsiung is a large city but most of what you want to see is clustered in a few areas: the Love River, especially in the section between Jianguo-3rd and Wufu-3rd Rd; the Tsoying District in the north; the harbour and Cijin Island; and the Sun Yat-sen University grounds.

Most travellers will have to spend at least some time around the train station, if only when catching a bus. It's still a grubby part of town, but at least it's not all torn up anymore with MRT construction. If you wish to cross the tracks behind the station, use

the tunnel starting in the train station. The fee is NT6 and you can purchase tickets in the train station.

One great change is the bilingual signage, not only for roads, but major attractions. And no more hiding street names behind coconut palms for this town.

Information

CULTURAL CENTRES

Chiang Kai-shek Cultural Centre (Zhōngzhèng Wénhuà Zhōngxīn; Map pp268-9; ☎ 222 5136, ext 237; 67 Wufu-1st Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm, closed Mon) The centre has lecture and concert halls, galleries and a library. To get there, catch bus 50 or 51. Note that the name of the centre may change as part of the de-Chiangification of Taiwan.

INTERNET ACCESS

There are many internet cafés around the Bo Ai Rd/Cisian-2nd Rd area (Map pp268-9). For free internet at Access Kaohsiung see below.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Kaohsiung City (www.kaohsiung.gov.tw) One of the best city tourism websites in Taiwan.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Chung-Ho Memorial Hospital, Kaohsiung Medical University (☎ 312 1101; www.kmuh.org.tw; 100 Zhiyou 1st Rd)

MONEY

There are banks and ATMs everywhere, including most 7-Elevens. You can change money at the following:

Bank of Taiwan (Map pp268-9; 264 Jhongjheng-4th Rd)

ICBC (Map pp268-9; 308 Jhongjheng-4th Rd)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Kaohsiung is not lacking in places to help you find the information you need. Look for

the booklet *Fun Kaohsiung* for an excellent overview.

Access Kaohsiung (Map p266; ☎ 342 2101, ext 811 or 0917-119 930 ask for Melissa; <http://accesskaohsiung.blogspot.com>; 801 Chongde Rd, Tsoying District; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Largely the brainchild of Canadian expat Mellisa Wriston, Access Kaohsiung (part of the Bureau of Human Resources) exists to help foreigners travel or get set up in Kaohsiung. In its little office, you'll find free internet, books, tons of English information including bus schedules and many guides and brochures that are hard to find elsewhere. You can take a 301 bus (2 zones) to the centre or walk from Lotus Lake.

FYI South Magazine (www.taiwanfun.com) This free bilingual monthly focuses on the south of Taiwan. You can pick it up at tourist centres and at many restaurants and entertainment venues across town. You can also download it.

Tourist Office (Map pp268-9; ☎ 281 1513; 5F, 235 Jhongjheng-4th Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Good for brochures and such, though staff speak limited English.

Train Station Visitor Centre (☎ 9am-7pm) Staff speak English and are a good source of information, especially for buses, as the city hub is right outside the train station.

Sights

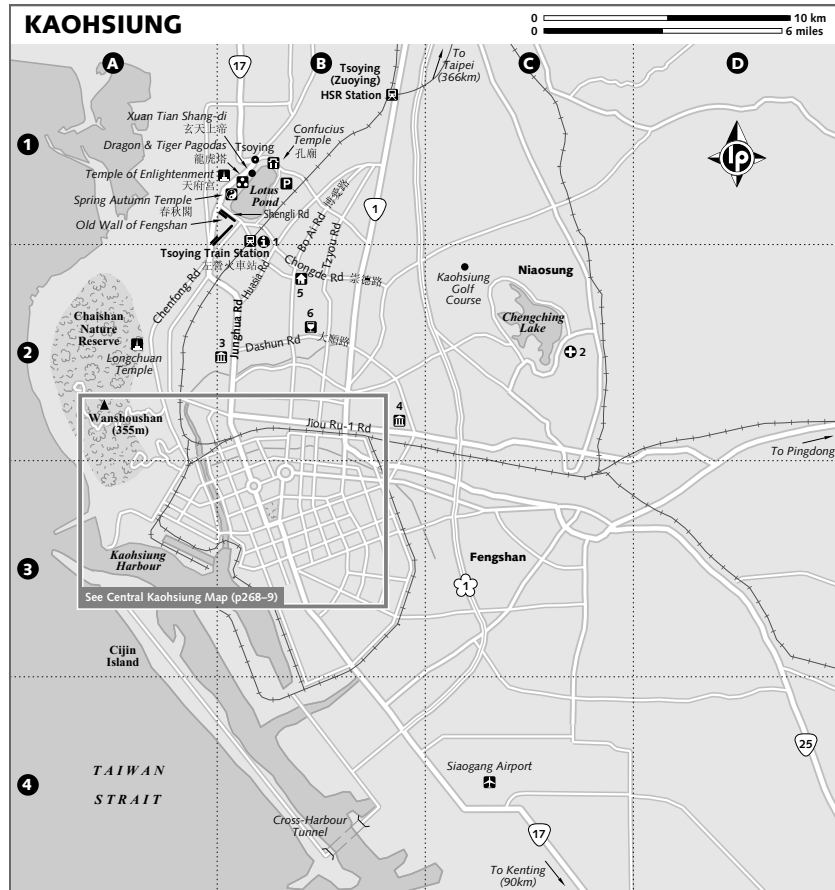
LOTUS POND 蓮池潭

The pond (Liánchí Tán; Map p266) has been a popular destination since the Qing dynasty and is well known for the 20 or so temples dotting the shoreline and nearby area. In recent years much money and effort has gone into returning the lake and its cultural and natural heritage to its former glory. There's now a path right around the lake, and efforts are underway to restore the wetlands on the west side. At night coloured lights give the lake a very festive and modern appearance.

Two long sections of the impressive **Old Wall of Fengshan** (Fèngshān Jiùcháng; Map p266), built in 1826, lie to the southeast of the lake. The best section is along Chenfong Rd about 100m up Shengli Rd from the train station.

If you are going to the pond, get your hands on a copy of the free booklet *Lotus Pond: Tourism Guide*. This is a highly informative and useful guide to all the temples and sights around the lake, including places to try traditional food. Tourist offices don't always have copies; try Access Kaohsiung.

To get to the lake, take a train to Tsoying station (Zuoying; Map p266). Exit the station and walk straight ahead two blocks up Shengli Rd. The lake is unmissable on the right. You can also catch bus 301.



INFORMATION	
Access Kaohsiung.....	1 B1
Chang Gung Hospital 長庚醫院.....	2 C2
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	
Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts 美術館.....	3 B2
National Science & Technology Museum 科學工藝博物館.....	4 B2
SLEEPING 🏠	
International Friendship House.....	5 B2
DRINKING 🍷	
Lighthouse Bar & Grill 燈塔美式酒館.....	6 B2

CIJIN ISLAND 旗津

Cijin Island (Qíjīn; Map pp268–9) makes for a pleasant half-day trip from the mainland. Attractions include the **seafood street** (*hāichān jiē*), a centuries-old **Matsu Temple** (Tiānhòu Gōng) with excellent relief and pillar carvings, and an old **lighthouse** (Qíjīn Dēngtǎ; admission free; ☎ 9am–4.30pm) with fantastic views over the ocean and harbour. There's also a long strip of sandy beach where you can swim in summer (there are free public changing rooms and showers) and stroll in winter (the city keeps it clean all year round, quite a rarity in Taiwan).

To reach the island, take bus 248 to the ferry terminal. The ferry (NT10, five minutes) runs every five minutes.

BRITISH CONSULATE AT TAKOU (DAGOU)

打狗英國領事館

Kaohsiung has a large number of well-preserved relics scattered around the city. The handsome redbrick **consulate** (Dàgǒu Yīngguó Lǐngshì Guǎn; Map pp268–9; ☎ 531 2560; 18 Linhai Rd; admission free; ☎ 9am–midnight), built in 1865 by a British trading company, has recently become one of our favourite hang-out spots. The consulate sits about 70m or so above the mouth of Kaohsiung harbour, and it's a great location for watching the giant container ships sail through the tiny mouth of the harbour.

Recently the old dining and tearooms were reopened. With their Victorian British design, and arched windows letting in the

sea views and breezes, they are top spots for enjoying a meal or drink (open from 10am to midnight).

While you're in the area check out a tiny **temple** to the left of the larger temple beside the consulate. There are two gods within the shrine, and if you ask most Taiwanese people they would not be able to identify them. And that's because these gods are not Chinese, but Dutch!

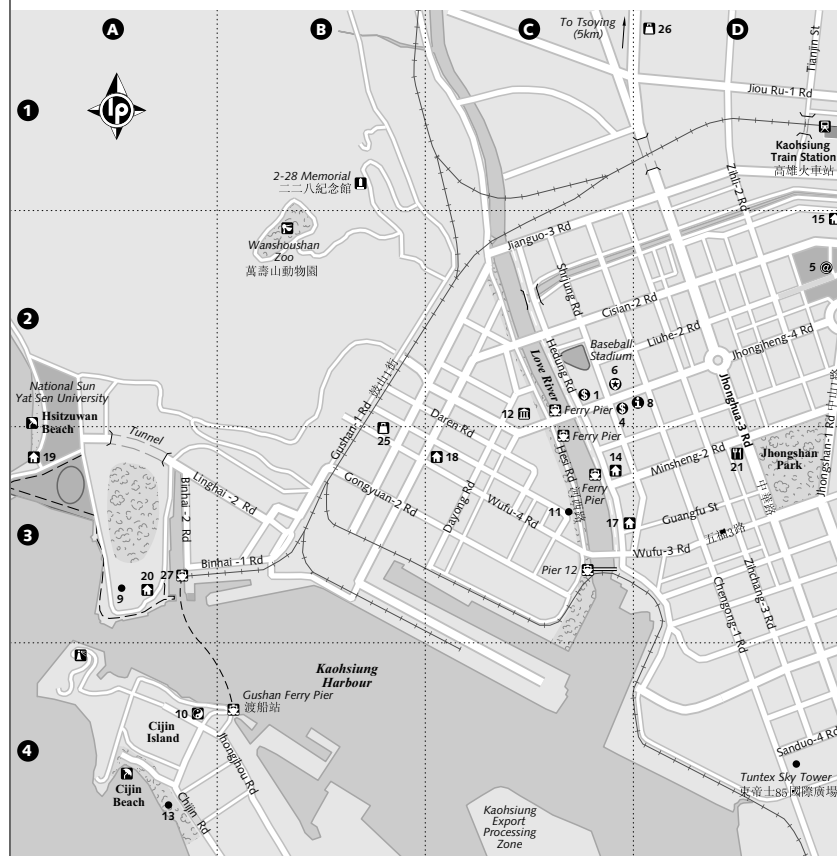
During the 17th century many Taiwanese revered the Dutch for their military and technical prowess. This temple, the only one of its kind in Taiwan, went so far as to deify two naval commanders, much as old Chinese generals have been deified over the centuries.

To get to the consulate, take bus 99 to the consulate stop and walk up the stairs. Or, take bus 248 to Binghai-2nd Rd (the harbour) then walk along the new paths around the cape to the stairs.

MUSEUMS

The **Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts** (Gāoxióng Měishùguǎn; Map p266; ☎ 555 0331; <http://english.kmfa.gov.tw>; 20 Meishuguan Rd; admission free; ☎ 9am–5pm, closed Mon; bus 205) has a stylish interior and highlights the art of southern Taiwan. The level of work on display is impressive.

The **National Science & Technology Museum** (Kèxué Gōngyǐ Bówùguǎn; Map p266; ☎ 316 0331; www.nstm.gov.tw; 720 Jiou Ru-1st Rd; adult/senior/child NT100/free/70, foreigner with passport NT50, IMAX adult/child

CENTRAL KAOHSIUNG**INFORMATION**

Bank of Taiwan 台灣銀行	1	C2
Chiang Kai-shek Cultural Centre 中正文化中心	2	F3
Chungwa Telecom 中華電信	3	E2
ICBC 中國國際商業銀行	4	C2
Internet Cafés	5	D2
National Immigration Agency 內政部入出國及移民署	6	C2
Post Office 郵局	7	E2
Tourist Office 旅客中心	8	D2

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

British Consulate at Takou 打狗英國領事館	9	A3
Matsu Temple 天后宮	10	A4
Municipal Film Archives 電影圖書館	11	C3
Museum of History 歷史博物館	12	C2
Seafood Street 海鮮街	13	A4

SLEEPING

Ambassador Hotel 國賓飯店	14	C3
Hotel Skoal 世國大飯店	15	D2
Hwa Hung Hotel 華宏大飯店	16	E1
Kaohsiung 202	17	C3
Kingship Hotel 漢王大飯店	18	C3
Sunset Beach Resort & Spa 西子灣沙灘會館	19	A3
Uni Resort 統一渡假村	20	A3

EATING

Lai Lai Seafood Barbecue Restaurant 來來碳烤海鮮餐廳	21	D3
Seafood Street 海鮮街	(see 13)	
Shou-Yu Vegetarian Buffet 秀羽素食	22	E2
Wudu Organic House 無毒的家有機健康世界	23	F3

ENTERTAINMENT

Vie Show Cinemas 華納威秀影城	24	E4
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SHOPPING

Bamboo Street 老竹街	25	B3
Jade Market 玉市場	26	D1

TRANSPORT

Cijin Ferry Terminal 渡船碼頭	27	A3
City Bus Hub 市公車站	28	E1
Kaohsiung Ke Yuan Station 高雄客運站	29	E1
Kuo Kuang Hao Bus Company Station 國光客運東站	30	E1

NT150/100; ☎ 9am–5pm, closed Mon & Chinese New Year) features an hourly IMAX show and high-quality hands-on science exhibits designed for children. Most of the IMAX shows and displays are in Chinese only. The exhibit on the Industrial History of Taiwan, however, has full English displays and is so informative it alone is worth the price of admission. You can take bus 60 to the museum.

LOVE RIVER 愛河

About five years ago, the **Love River** (Ài Hé; Map pp268–9) began to be cleaned up after years of neglect, if not outright abuse. As the waters flowed clear again, the banks were turned into strips of lovely parkland featuring walkways, benches, shady trees, outdoor cafés and stages. And it just keeps getting better year after year. These days it has become the focal point of the renewed pride Kaohsiung citizens feel for their city. One of the most popular activities now is cruising along the river at night. There are four piers from where you can catch a boat for a 20-minute ride (NT50) from 4pm to 11.30pm every day. Boats leave often and are usually full on weekends.

Just back from the river is the wonderful **Municipal Film Archives** (Diànyǐng Túshūguǎn; Map pp268–9; ☎ 551 1211; 10 Hesi Rd; admission free; ☎ 1.30–9.30pm, closed Mon), where you can enjoy on-site private and public viewings of the Archives' films. It's just a shame they won't sell the movie posters in the lobby.

A few blocks north of the Archives, also beside the river, is the lovely **Museum of History** (Lìshǐ Bówùguǎn; Map pp268–9; ☎ 531 2560; http://w5.kcg.gov.tw/khm; 272 Jhongjheng-4th Rd; admission free; ☎ 9am–5pm, closed Mon), formerly the city government building during Japanese times. Inside are a number of photographic exhibits, furniture displays and special seasonal exhibits. But we just like to walk up and down the cool marble staircase. Bus 248 stops by the Museum of History, putting you in the centre of the Love River area.

KAOHSIUNG HARBOUR

The harbour (*gǎngkǒu*; Map pp268–9) itself has recently become an attraction as more and more of it is opened up to the public. Down by Pier 12 and the Gushan Ferry Pier you'll find walkways and cafés where you can sit by

the water and enjoy the ships sailing in and being loaded and unloaded. No, we're not talking about a scene of shirtless coolies hauling bamboo crates off a four-masted barque – these are massive container ships, and the modern port is fully outfitted with cranes and lifts to unload the cargo. (And it's no less enjoyable for that.)

Harbour cruises leave from Pier 12 several times a day (NT150, 90 minutes). Check at the visitor centre for the current schedule.

BEACHES

Kaohsiung is lucky to have two decent beaches right within the city borders. The beach on **Cijin Island** (Map pp268–9; admission free) is just a five-minute ferry ride (and another five-minute walk). There are showers and changing rooms but be aware that there are serious rip tides along the more open parts of the beach.

Hsitzuwan (Sizi Bay; Xiziwān; Map pp268–9; winter/summer admission NT50/70) is smaller than Cijin, but it's a calmer swimming beach and is also an excellent place for hanging out and watching the sunset. We prefer it to Cijin, as it has a cool tropical feel and a lovely mountain backdrop. The beach is on the grounds of Sun Yat-sen University so the whole environment on and around the beach is clean and well maintained. To get to the beach, take bus 224 to the Sun Yat-sen University stop and then walk through the tunnel. You'll see signs for the beach on the other side. There are changing rooms and showers here too, as well as a café.

Both beaches are open all year round, and kept clean all year round, though swimming is only from May to October.

Activities

HIKING

Within Kaohsiung City there is good hiking in the 1000-hectare **Chaishan Nature Reserve** (Cháishān Zìrán Gōngyuán; Map p266), which has been preserved since Japanese times. There's a decent brochure and map of the area at the tourist office. The Chaishan reserve is famous for its macaque population, so don't carry food into the area and watch out that the monkeys don't steal your camera!

On weekends and holidays you can take the Chaishan Line bus to the reserve from the train station. On weekdays take bus 248

to Yancheng Station (鹽埕站) then change to bus 219 to Longcuyan Temple (龍泉寺). The trails start behind the temple.

Just walking around the university (Map pp268–9) and getting lost in the hills is pleasant too. Some trails will take you up to the zoo, and also up to the nature reserve.

VOLUNTEERING

Animal-lovers can make Kaohsiung a better place for our four-legged friends by helping out at **BARK** (www.atkaohsiung.org). BARK was started in 2006 by expats in Kaohsiung and since has grown quickly to become a registered nonprofit organization (NPO) with plenty of both Taiwanese and Western volunteers. BARK is involved in rehoming, catch-neuter-release (CNR) programmes, and rescues, in addition to raising awareness of the huge problem of stray animals in Taiwan. Not only is helping out a great thing to do, but you'll meet a lot of kind, generous folk. (For more information, see p343).

2009 WORLD GAMES

The World Games are the second-largest international sporting event after the Olympics. The 2009 events will take place in Kaohsiung from 16–26 July. Over 3000 athletes are expected to attend and the whole spectacle will certainly be a huge boost for the city's international image.

Festivals & Events

As befitting a port city, there is a quirky **International Container Arts Festival** (Guójì Huòguì Yìshù Jié) in November, during which containers are used as art material.

There are also praise-worthy shows during Chinese New Year at the Chiang Kai-shek Cultural Centre and the colourful (and often hi-tech) lantern displays along the Love River during Lantern Festival.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Budget accommodation took a turn for the better in 2007 as two new hostels opened up. Both are run by English-speaking expats and, best of all, one is in the southern part of the city beside the Love River, while the other is up by Lotus Pond.

Kaohsiung 202 (Map pp268–9; ☎ 0938-020 304; www.kaohsiung-taiwan.com/202; 202 Guangfu-3rd St;

THE BETEL NUT BEAUTY Robert Kelly

It's said in advertising that sex sells, as do small cute animals and children. Leave it to the Taiwanese to find a way to conflate all three ideals into one. They did and they call it the Betel Nut Beauty (*Bīnláng Xīshì*).

The beauty is a young woman, or teenage girl, often extremely pretty, who sits in a glass booth on the side of provincial highways and county roads, wearing as little as possible to attract customers. Her ware is the betel nut (*bīnláng*), the seed of the betel palm, a tree that grows throughout Asia. As for the cute animal angle, well (and yes this is a bit of a stretch, I admit), very often a little dog accompanies her in the booth, or at the very least a shelf full of Hello Kitty products.

In any case, betel nut is a US\$1 billion dollar industry in Taiwan. To make it fit for consumption, the nut is usually slit down the middle, mixed with lime, and wrapped in a leaf. The effects on the mind and body are comparable to nicotine and caffeine. It's extremely popular, though it does lead to oral cancer, and growing the nut tree is a scourge on the environment.

While many countries have betel nut, only Taiwan has the Betel Nut Beauty, named after Xi Shi, a legendary paragon of Chinese beauty. The phenomenon started in the 1990s and grew quickly, through competition and one-upmanship, to the point where literally nothing was being worn by the girls but see-through skirts and blouses. Many locals took a strange pride in this and an even stranger joy in exposing foreign guests to the, well, exposed charms of the local beauties.

But all good things must end, and by the time everyone could admit the empresses really had no clothes on, the politicians had gotten involved. 'No exposure of breasts, belly buttons or buttocks', they declared, and somehow or other this ban has managed to stay enforced. It's true we do see the occasional flash of defiance in our travels around the country, but by all accounts the glory days of the Betel Nut Beauty are behind us. For one last glimpse of what has been lost, do a search for 'Betel Nut Girls Taiwan' on Youtube.com to see a trailer for South African Tobie Openshaw's upcoming documentary.

光復3街202號; dm/s/d with shared bathroom NT280/350/500; ☎ Taipei has its 101, and now Kaohsiung has its...202? It's a little smaller but it does the trick for the independent traveller coming for a visit or looking for a place to stay while he or she gets set up. Bright colours and liberal use of wood give the hostel a welcoming atmosphere, and the rooftop views over the harbour make it comfortable for hanging out. Other perks include an English-speaking manager, free use of a computer with ADSL, and the location: close to the harbour and right by the Love River.

International Friendship House (Map p266; ☎ 0971-119 930; accesskaohsiung@yahoo.com; 83 Lane 129, Wun Tze Rd, Tsoying; 左營文自路129巷83號; per person NT400; ☎) The house is a modern five-storey apartment 1km from Lotus Pond. Run by a member of Access Kaohsiung, it features a homey atmosphere with all the fixings: wireless internet, full shared kitchen, TV, stereo etc. There are two rooms per floor (for two to four people each) and each floor has its own bathroom. Towels and toiletries are provided should you need them. Laundry was being set up at the time of writing. The house is down a quiet lane but there are plenty of cheap eats (and fancy eats, too) nearby. Long- and short-term stays are accepted. In either case, you should call or email Melissa before heading out. Don't just show up.

Hotel Skoal (Shiguō Dàfāndiàn; Map pp268-9; ☎ 287 6151; fax 288 6020; 64 Min Zhu Heng Rd; 民主橫路64號; d/tw NT780/1600; ☎) Rooms are small and a little dark, but kept very clean. There's a car park across from the hotel.

Hwa Hung Hotel (Huá Hóng Dàfāndiàn; Map pp268-9; ☎ 237 5523; 243 Jianguo-2nd Rd; 建國2路243號; d/tw NT950/1500; ☎) This place has two things going for it: it's right by the train station, and it's got a fresh, funky interior that looks like it was taken out of a comic book. In fact we were completely unprepared for the interiors, with their bright tropical colours, and decent furnishings. And all for a sub-thousand dollar price! Ask for the rooms with wood floors.

MIDRANGE

Kaohsiung hotels offer good value for the midrange dollar and good locations.

Kingship Hotel (Hàn wáng Dàfāndiàn; Map pp268-9; ☎ 531 3131, ext 60; fax 531 3140; 98 Cisian-3rd Rd; 七賢3路98號; s/d/tw NT2100/2300/3500; ☎) With its fresh,

modern design (we are so happy the flower prints are gone), proximity to the Love River and the bars and restaurants along Wufu-4th Rd, and good price (10% weekday discount), the Kingship makes for a good midrange option.

Uni Resort (Tōngyī Dújiàcūn; Map pp268-9; ☎ 533 6680; 14 Shaochuan St; 哨船街14號; d/tw NT4000/5500; ☎) An excellent place to stay if you want both a comfy environment and lots of room to move around. The hotel is right on the waterfront, with walking paths to the ferry and the university right on your doorstep. There's a small spa in the basement. There's a discount of 45% in winter, 20% in summer.

Sunset Beach Resort & Spa (Xiziwān Shātān Huiguān; Map pp268-9; ☎ 525 0005; hsiizuwan@yahoo.com.tw; 51 Lianhai Rd; 蓮海路51號; d/tw NT6000/6800; ☎) The rooms are a good size and feature soft beds, good bedding and other midrange comforts. But it's the location that really sells the place. It is literally on the beach, and the hotel has its own private entrance. It's also right within the university grounds, giving you access to tennis courts, jogging tracks, hiking trails and lots of greenery. The hotel has a restaurant and café on the premises. There are discounts of 30% to 50% in winter, 30% to 40% in summer.

TOP END

Ambassador Hotel (Guóbin Fāndiàn; Map pp268-9; ☎ 211 5211; fax 281 1115; 202 Minsheng-2nd Rd; 民生2路202號; s/d/tw NT4500/5500/5500; ☎) Part of a group of luxury hotels in Taiwan, the Ambassador is rated one of Kaohsiung's best. Facilities include business centre, outdoor pool, health club and a host of food and beverage options.

Eating

There's food everywhere in Kaohsiung, at all times of day and night.

Shou-Yu Vegetarian Buffet (Xiūyú Sùshí; Map pp268-9; 274 Jhonghsiao-1st Rd; dishes NT120) Shou-Yu has branches in most major Taiwanese cities and is popular for the light, fresh taste of its food. It's old looking, but the food is good.

Wudu Organic House (Wúdúde Jiā Yóuji Jiànkāng Shìjiē; Map pp268-9; ☎ 556 1178; 114 Sihwei-2nd Rd; dishes NT120-200; ☎) 10am-9pm The health conscious can head to this place, an organic restaurant and shop.

The train-station area, especially as you head down Jhongshan Rd, is filled with inexpensive cafés and restaurants. Nearby **Liuhe Night Market** (Liúhé Yèshì; Map pp268-9; ☎) 6pm-2am is famous island-wide for its hundred-plus

food stalls. You can eat well here for NT100 to NT200. (It's also very clean, as there is literally one rubbish can every 10m.) Other places to try traditional foods include the Lotus Pond area, especially on Shengli Rd.

For fresh seafood head over to Cijin Island's seafood street. Or try the locally recommended **Lai Lai Seafood Barbecue Restaurant** (Lái Lái Tānkǎo Hǎixiān Cǎntīng; Map pp268-9; ☎ 215 6966; 53 Minsheng-2nd Rd; ☎) 10am-3pm & 5pm-3am. It's the kind of place you go to eat good seafood, drink cheap beer, and be loud. Just tell the staff how much you want to spend and they will arrange dishes for you. Be sure to tell them anything you don't eat (like fish head perhaps?).

Drinking

The area around Jhongshan Park (Map pp268-9) houses an assortment of modern cafés, and there's even one in the park itself. Along the Love River the many small cafés stay open late into the evening. For a beer or meal at a pub, head to one of the joints along Wufu-4th Rd.

A new area to check out for tea or coffee, or even a beer, is the harbour. At the time of writing there were a few cafés at Gushan Ferry Pier with open decks facing the water. More will doubtless open as the harbour continues to be developed for tourism. And of course there is the British Consulate (p268), which overlooks the harbour and has to be one of the nicest settings in the south for a meal or drink.

Lighthouse Bar & Grill (Dēngtǎ Měishì Jiūguǎn; Map p266; ☎ 559 2614; 239 Fuguo-1st Rd; beer NT100; ☎) 6pm-late) is a popular hang-out in the Tsoying District with good service, seasonal activities and live sports.

Entertainment

Clubs come and go quickly, so ask around or check out *FYI South* magazine.

Vue Show Cinemas (Huánà Wéixiù Yǐngchéng; Map pp268-9; ☎ 337 1234; www.warnervillage.com.tw in Chinese; 13-14F, 21 Sanduo-4th Rd; adult/child NT230/210) In the FE21' Mega Department Store. You can book tickets online in English.

Shopping

Bamboo Street (Lǎozhú Jiē; Map pp268-9) At the end of Wufu-4th Rd you'll find wares from the past, including traditional hats, raincoats and household articles made from bamboo.

Jade Market (Yù Shìchāng; Map pp268-9; cnr Shihcuan-2nd Rd and Zihli Rd; ☎) 10.30am-late afternoon Wed & Thu Bargain hard and, if possible, bring someone

along who knows something about jade. Of course it's also fun just to browse.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Kaohsiung's Siaoang Airport, located south of the city centre, serves both international and domestic flights.

UNI Air (☎ 801 0189), **TransAsia Airways** (☎ 803 0599), **Mandarin Airlines** (☎ 805 7900), **Daily Air Corporation** (☎ 806 9397) and **Far Eastern Transport** (☎ 801 2311) have counters in Kaohsiung's **Siaoang Domestic Airport Terminal** (Map p266; www.kia.gov.tw). There are flights from Kaohsiung to Taipei, Hualien, Kinmen, Matsu and Penghu. **EVA** (☎ 536 9301) and **China Airlines** (☎ 282 6141) have counters in the international terminal. There are flights to Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Singapore and Korea.

There are two **visitor centres** (☎ 805 7888; ☎) 9am-12.30am) in the airport, one in each terminal. Both can help with hotels, tours, buses, car hire and so on. Staff speak good English.

The domestic and international terminals are joined and you can quickly walk from one to the other. There are money-changing facilities available in the international terminal till 10pm (cash only, no travellers cheques). There's a post office in the domestic terminal. All airport signs are bilingual.

BOAT

The **Taiwan Hangye Company** (☎ 561 3866; www.taiwanline.com.tw/table.htm in Chinese) operates *Taiwanline*, which has services to Makung, Penghu. Boats (NT600 to NT1300) leave from Kaohsiung's Pier 1 (Map pp268-9), near the ferry to Cijin Island, from mid-March into September. The schedule changes every three months and boats are limited in winter. Schedules are posted online (in Chinese only).

BUS

Buses to Fuguangshan (NT77, 30 minutes, every 40 minutes), Kenting (two-hour ride NT342, three-hour ride NT298, every hour, 24 hours per day) and Meinong (NT121, 1½ hours, every hour) leave from the **Kaohsiung Bus Company station** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 746 2141; 245 Nanhua St). Don't confuse this with the **Kuo Kuang Hao Bus Company station** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 236 0962; 306 Jianguo Rd), which is just in front and has buses to Taipei (weekday/weekend NT400/500, 5½ hours, every 30 minutes, 24 hours per day).

TRAIN

Kaohsiung is the terminus for most west coast trains. Trains to and from Taipei (fast/slow NT845/544, 4½/seven hours) run frequently from early morning till almost midnight. To Taichung (fast/slow NT470/363, 2½/three hours), trains run about every two hours.

High-Speed Rail (HSR)

At the time of writing there was HSR service (NT1490, two hours) between Taipei and Tsoying (Zuoying) Station (Map p266) about every hour.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT & HIGH-SPEED RAIL
Bus 301 goes to both the airport (NT12, every 15 minutes) and the HSR, and leaves from the bus hub in front of the train station. Note that the two destinations are in opposite directions so make sure you get the bus going in the right direction or you will make a big and time-consuming loop. Taxis to the airport or HSR should cost around NT200 from the city centre.

BUS

Buses in Kaohsiung usually have English signs at the front and electronic English signs inside indicating the next stop. The city bus hub (Map pp268–9) is directly in front of the train station. The fare for a one-zone trip is NT12. Pick up a copy of the very useful English *Kaohsiung Bus Guide* at a visitor centre or Access Kaohsiung.

CAR

For car hire call **IWS** (☎ 0800 009 414), **Hertz** (☎ 0800 015 168) or **Central Auto** (☎ 802 0800; www.rentalcar.com.tw). All have English-speaking staff and do pick-ups.

MASS RAPID TRANSIT

Kaohsiung's MRT system was behind schedule at the time of writing but may be ready by the end of 2008. When the KMRT (underground railway) opens there will be a line to both the airport and HSR station.

FOGUANGSHAN 佛光山

☎ 07

The Light of Buddha Mountain or Foguangshan (Fóguāngshān; www.fgs.org.tw), is a 52-acre temple complex about a 30-minute drive from Kaohsiung. The complex serves as

monastery, university and meditation centre. It is considered *the* centre of Buddhism in southern Taiwan.

The most famous feature here is the **Great Buddha Land** (大佛城; Dàfóchéng), where a towering 36m Amitabha Buddha stands over a garden of 480 smaller Buddha statues. For many, though, the Disneyland-like **Pure Land Cave** (淨土洞窟; Jìngtǔ Dòngkū), with its animated figures and light show, is the more interesting sight.

Tours in English of up to a half-day can be arranged with the nuns at **reception** (信徒中心; xintú zhōngxīn; ☎ 656 1921, ext 6203-6205). Temple tours stress the ceremonial aspects of Buddhism and you will be requested to bow, kowtow and otherwise observe all forms of respect and devotion. Wear appropriate clothing and do not carry any food or drinks. In return, you will be instructed in Buddhist thought, history and iconography and may receive advice and blessed trinkets.

The **Pilgrim's Lodge** (Jiūshān Huiguān; d NT2000) invites devotees and tourists to spend the night. The accommodation is surprisingly good. The meditation centres host frequent retreats for beginners and experienced practitioners. Check the website for details, and more on the history and mission of the temple. Arrangements for meditation classes or an overnight temple stay can be made in advance.

To get to the temple, take a bus (NT77, 30 to 60 minutes, hourly) from the Kaohsiung Bus Company station in Kaohsiung.

MEINONG 美濃

☎ 07 / pop 45,187

Northeast of Foguangshan, rural Meinong (Méinóng), once the centre of a thriving tobacco industry, has now refashioned itself as a rural retreat. Fortunately, its popularity hasn't yet ruined the very reasons people want to come here. The countryside is still covered with fields of bananas, tobacco and rice, people still smile at strangers from their front porches, and everyone wants to know your story.

Meinong was settled about 200 years ago by Hakka (Kèjiā rén) immigrants. While the Hakka make up about 10% to 15% of the population of Taiwan, in Meinong the percentage goes up to 95%. The Hakka are traditionally seen as a hard-working people, who value education, and little Meinong can count a disproportionate amount of PhDs (and in the past, imperial scholars) among its population.



In recent years a number of B&Bs and even a camping ground have opened in Meinong. It's well worth your while to while away a few days here. Winter is our favourite time to go, as the weather is perfect – warm and dry – and the tourists are few. And, around Chinese New Year farmers plant colourful cosmos flowers in the fallow fields to help restock the soil before the next growing season. It's a lovely sight.

Information

Road signs in Meinong are usually bilingual. With our map you should have no problem getting around.

For more history on the Hakka people check out <http://en.ihakka.net> and see p45.

The Kaohsiung County tourism website (<http://cultural.kscg.gov.tw>) has a good overview of the sights at Meinong, including many we don't have the space to list.

Sights & Activities**CYCLING**

One of the most pleasant things to do in Meinong is to get into the countryside on

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

- Bike Rental 1 D1
- Meinong Folk Village 美濃民俗村 2 A3

SLEEPING

- Jhōng Jhēng Hu B&B 中正湖山莊民宿 3 D1
- Shui Lian Tian Campground 水蓮天 4 A3

EATING

- Meinong Traditional Hakka Restaurant
美濃古老客家菜 5 B2

SHOPPING

- Guan De Xin Paper Umbrella Restaurant
廣德興紙傘 6 B2

TRANSPORT

- Bus Station 7 C2

a bike. The town of Meinong is not particularly attractive, but the countryside is lush and dotted with tobacco sheds and three-sided Fujian-style houses.

Some of the best cycling is off the main road towards the ridge. Another enjoyable route is to ride out of town on County Rd 140 east towards Liugui and then head left into the fields. There are colour-coded bike routes across Meinong but at the time of writing the

lines on the road were fading, and in any case, maps were in Chinese only.

On weekends you can hire bikes to the right of the Meinong the Hakkas Museum on 40-3 Minzu Rd. The Shui Lian Tian Campground also rents bikes, as do most B&Bs.

MEINONG FOLK VILLAGE 美濃民俗村

The **village** (Měinóng Mínsú Cūn; ☎ 681 0072; 80 Lane 421, Jungshan Rd, sec.2; admission free; ☎ 8am-8pm) is an artificial recreation of an old-fashioned neighbourhood. It is definitely touristy but worth visiting nonetheless, as you can watch traditional crafts being made and sample *léi chá* (擂茶; pounded tea), an assortment of sticky-rice snacks, and tasty traditional noodles.

Village stores sell well-made paper umbrellas, fans and bamboo baskets. At the back of the village, outside the last shop, are two metal pots filled with water. Dip your hands in the water and rub the handles of the pots. The sound is like a hundred wine glasses being rubbed at one time.

YELLOW BUTTERFLY VALLEY 黃蝶翠谷

Locals have told us that the butterflies are coming back in numbers to the valley (Huángdié Cuigǔ) and recent seasons have been the best in years. The butterflies flock to the valley in June and July and are best seen in the morning when the sun rises (and rouses the butterflies from sleep).

Sleeping

Jhong Jheng Hu B&B (Zhōng Zhèng Hú Shānzhūāng Mínsù; ☎ 681 2736; fax 681 7783; 30 Fumei Rd; 福美路30號; dm with Youth Guesthouse card NT300, r from 1500) The owner of this pleasant B&B is a local tour guide. She doesn't speak English but her son helps out. Stay in the newer building for the larger windows overlooking the fields and perfect sunset views over palm trees and low mountains. Bikes are free for guests.

Shui Lian Tian Campground (Shuǐ Lián Tiān; ☎ 0911-735 589; 80-1 Lane 421, Jungshan Rd, sec.2; camp sites NT500) A family-run camping ground with a quaint old wooden restaurant and teahouse on the grounds, with traditional foods and tea. The camping ground is just to the left of the folk village from the back parking lot. Bike rental is free for guests and NT100 per day for nonguests.

Eating

Meinong Traditional Hakka Restaurant (美濃古老客家菜; Měinóng Gǔlǎo Kējīcài; ☎ 681 1156; 362-5

Jungshan Rd, sec.1; dishes NT120-200; ☎ 9am-2pm & 5-9pm) One of many places around Meinong to try good Hakka food. The restaurant is decorated with old farming implements and other rustic daily use items. A simple bowl of *bǎntiáo* (板條; flat rice noodles) costs only NT35.

Shopping

Craftsmen have been making umbrellas in Meinong for 80 years, ever since a local businessman bought up a Chinese master's shop (and all his suppliers) and forced him to move to Meinong. The umbrellas are made of paper and bamboo, hand-painted and lacquered to make them durable and waterproof. They make great decorations and gifts.

Guan De Xin Paper Umbrella Shop (Guāng Dé Xīng Zhǐsǎn; ☎ 681 0451; 361 Jungshan Rd sec.1) If you're looking to buy, this is one of the best places. An umbrella here costs between NT600 and NT1200.

Getting There & Around

You can catch a bus directly into Meinong from the Kaohsiung Bus Company station in Kaohsiung (NT121, 1½ hours, every hour).

Meinong is quite small but the surrounding countryside is expansive and you'll need a vehicle or bicycle (which you can hire) to get around. If you stay at a B&B the owners can likely help you hire a scooter.

SANMIN 三民

pop 500

Not many foreign travellers make it as far as remote Sanmin (Sānmín), north of Meinong on Hwy 21. But with your own transport, especially a scooter, you can explore rugged canyons, high mountains, small aboriginal villages, and long winding country roads dotted with palms and yellow and red poinsettias (at least in winter).

Be prepared though for a lot of attention. At one breakfast shop, we got three marriage proposals in the first 10 minutes (and a fourth a little after that). Don't leave your sense of humour at home for this trip.

The best way to approach Sanmin is just to go. There are three small villages with shops, restaurants and B&Bs (民宿) so you won't go hungry or lack a place to stay. A few shops even serve exotic fare such as squirrel and cricket. There are English road signs to waterfalls, natural-gas fires and deep gorges, so you won't just wander around lost (not that that isn't fun).

One local sight that deserves a mention is **Holy Mt Zion** (錫安山; Xiānān Shān; admission free; ☎ 6.30am-5pm). The mount is the home of the New Testament Church, a fundamentalist group founded by Hong Kong movie actress Kong Duen-ye in 1963. It's an odd, odd place, with loudspeakers blasting out Hallelujahs, and posters on walls depicting the end of the world, and sporting such slogans as 'Diplomas are the tool of Satan' (which of course they are, but to actually say it!). And yes, that reads diplomas!

The members welcome visitors to the mountain, however, and you can wander around freely. Quality organic produce is available for sale. For a good overview of the history of Mount Zion check out www.taiwanho.com/print.php?sid=209.

It takes about two hours to drive to Sanmin from Meinong. If you continue north you can reach Danayigu in the Alishan National Scenic Area on a narrow county road. There's hardly any traffic along this route and the scenery is superb.

MEINONG TO MAOLIN

The cross-island highways get all the glory, but for sheer diversity of landscape and activity don't miss this stretch of road through the interior of Kaohsiung County.

The drive begins outside Meinong on Provincial Hwy 28. The first attractions of note are the **Liugui Tunnels** (六龜隧道; Liùgūi Sùidào), a series of seven long mountain tunnels opened recently for people to walk through. (Note that some of the tunnels were closed at the time of writing.)

Just past the tunnels, the **18 Lohan Mountains** (十八羅漢山; Shíbā Lóhàn Shān) begin to appear. The exotic beauty of these crags, jutting up like the rows of armour on a dinosaur's back, had us jumping out of our car every minute for a photo.

Next you'll reach the town of **Liugui** (六龜; Liùgūi), famous for bell fruit and mangoes. If you're interested in **river rafting** continue up to Paolai (p261).

A few kilometres south of Liugui are roads leading into two forest recreation areas: **Tengchih** (藤枝森林遊樂區; Téngzhī Sēnlín Yóulè Qū; <http://recreate.forest.gov.tw>) and **Shanping** (扇平森林生態科學園區; Shànping Sēnlín Shēngtài Kēxué Yuán Qū).

Tengchih is said to have one of the best-preserved natural forests in Taiwan, while

little-visited Shanping offers peaceful trails and excellent bird-watching.

The last stretch of the trip takes you down Hwy 27 to Maolin. Interestingly, the landscape looks completely different on this side even though you are just retracing your route down on the opposite bank of the river.

MAOLIN RECREATION AREA

茂林遊憩區

☎ 07

The recreation area (Màolín Yóuqī Qū), part of the much larger Maolin National Scenic Area, covers a protected region from Maolin (estimated population 200) to Dona (estimated population 200) Village. Here you'll find pristine mountain landscapes, vertiginously high suspension bridges, waterfalls, natural swimming pools and even free outdoor hot springs. Rukai aboriginal culture is strong in this part of the country and Dona Village is one of the best places to see tradition stone slab houses.

But Maolin's greatest hit is the Purple Butterfly Valley. Considered one of the two most important butterfly migratory resting grounds in the world (the other is the Monarch Butterfly Valley around Mexico City), the valley gifts Taiwan in the winter with a daily show of hundreds, or even thousands, of butterflies dancing in the air as the first rays of the morning sun tip over the mountains.

Orientation & Information

It's simple to get around the scenic area. There is only one main road, County Rd 132, connecting the two villages. It's 15km from the Maolin administration office to Dona.

The **Maolin National Scenic Area Administration Office** (Màolín Guójiā Fēngjīng Qū Guǎnlǐ Chū; ☎ 680 1488; www.maolin-nsa.gov.tw; ☎ 9am-5pm) is just past the **tollgate** (admission NT70; ☎ 6am-10pm) to the scenic area. The staff speak no English, but the exhibits are usually bilingual and includes an excellent introduction to the purple butterfly.

For information about the Rukai people see www.sinica.edu.tw/tit/scenery/0296_Maolin.html.

Sights & Activities

PURPLE BUTTERFLY VALLEY 紫蝶幽谷

The valley is not just one geographic location so there are several good places to see the insects. Just to the left of Maolin Village, **Maolin Park** (Màolín Gōngyuán) has a few hectares of

butterfly-protection area. The park maintains a small display shelter but it's more fascinating to see the butterflies on the trails around the park. Though the good spots seem to change every year, at the time of writing the best location could be found by following the park trail up to where it connects with a small road and by following the road down to the right. Eventually the road crosses a bridge before returning to the small road that leads back to the park. Around the bridge we saw a thousand or more butterflies fluttering in the air.

Just up the road from the administration office is another butterfly viewing area on the left. You can't miss this one as there are usually crowds of people and buses and even a vendor or two.

The best time to watch the butterflies is between 9am and 11am, when the sun first comes over the mountains and rouses the insects from sleep. It's possible to arrange a tour, but we usually just follow one in progress.

WATERFALLS

You can drive up to the first of the five levels of the **Qingren Valley Waterfall** (Qíngren Gǔ Pùbù). It's then a 10-minute walk to the second level.

The next waterfall in the park is the **Maolin Gorge Waterfall** (Màolín Gǔ Pùbù). As you drive down into Maolin Gorge (Valley) there is a sign and map for the waterfall just before you cross the river. Follow the road until it forks at the end and go right. There's a parking area 1.5km up the road. The trail runs

beside the river for 2km. You can swim in the waterfall pool but be careful as it's a slippery descent.

Further up the main road through Maolin is the turn-off for the picturesque **Meiyagu Waterfall** (Měiyǎgǔ Pùbù). From the car park it's about a 15-minute walk on a smooth stone path.

ROAD TO DONA

County Rd 132 from Maolin Village to Dona features a number of roadside attractions, including the **Dona High Suspension Bridge** (Dōnà Gāudiàoqiáo), and the **Snake Head Mountain** (Shétóu Shān) and **Dragon Head Mountain** (Lóngtóu Shān), which are actually odd-shaped mounds in the middle of the river valley.

Dona (Dōnà) is a stronghold for Rukai aboriginal culture, and stonework, including traditional shale houses, which are visible everywhere (though there is quite a bit of ugly modern development as well).

HOT SPRINGS

The free outdoor **Dona Hot Springs** (Dōnà Wēnquán) have been, well not quite ruined, but made a lot less attractive recently. Instead of small pools in the rocks, there is now a concrete platform with two long concrete pools. Many people ignore this now and head upstream. There is a small wild spring pool not far up on the left and a canyon just made for exploring.

You can reach the springs by a trail that begins at the end of Dona Village, or by

driving on County Rd 132 past the village a few kilometres.

A new set of springs (we think they are free, though it wasn't clear) have opened up recently in the **Hongcheng Gorge** (Hóngchén Xiáǔ). Again they are pumped into cement pools, but the setting is very scenic as you overlook the river valley from tub level. Even if you don't visit the hot springs you can park here and use the location as a base for exploring the river.

Sleeping

There are half a dozen guesthouses in Dona charging around NT1500 a night for a double. Just walk around and you will see them.

De En Gorge Guesthouse (Dé Ēn Gǔ Mínsù; ☎ 0955-055 132; dm/camp sites/2-person cabins NT300/500/2000) Set high above the river on a grassy meadow, and run by an exceptionally friendly couple, this should be your default accommodation in Maolin. Camping is permitted. The Indigenous People's Culture Park on the grass bluff and the cabins, made of grey stone, are a great stylish option. Dorm rooms have two single beds per room so if you're a couple you can get your own room and bathroom. To get to the guesthouse head down to Maolin Valley and cross the bridge. When the road ends at a fork, head left and up about a kilometre or so. The first building you see is the guesthouse.

Fungshan Agricultural Activity Centre (Fēngshānshì Nóngshuǐ Mào lín Huìyuán Huódòng Zhōngxīn; ☎ 680 1115; d/tw NT1500/3200) Rooms are large and clean but very spartan. There's a restaurant in the hotel but it's for groups only.

Eating

Your options are very limited and most dishes have MSG in them (even asking for barbecued

corn to be made without it just elicits blank stares). Little stalls are set up on the main road in Maolin (often in what looks to be people's ramshackle living rooms), but be aware that these places close early (by 6pm or 7pm) on weekdays. Don't wait to eat!

On weekends, large barbecue pits are set up in Dona, but these are not suitable for a single person unless you can eat a whole chicken. Around Dona Hot Springs a number of small shops sell pretty good barbecued meats, soups and stir-fried mountain vegetables (average dish NT100). Some places claim to be open 24 hours a day.

Just before the tollgate there are a few other shops, including a good fruit-shake stand, but these also close by 6pm. Down Provincial Hwy 27 a short distance there's a small grocery store on the right.

Getting There & Away

There are buses from Pingdong, but Maolin is just too large an area to explore without your own vehicle unless you have a lot of time. Consider renting a scooter in Tainan (per day NT200) and riding there.

PINGDONG 屏東

☎ 08 / pop 216,777

Though Pingdong (Píngdōng) is actually not a bad-looking little town, there is little here for the traveller. If you need to spend the night there are a couple of obvious places across from the train station where you can get a room for less than NT1000 a night.

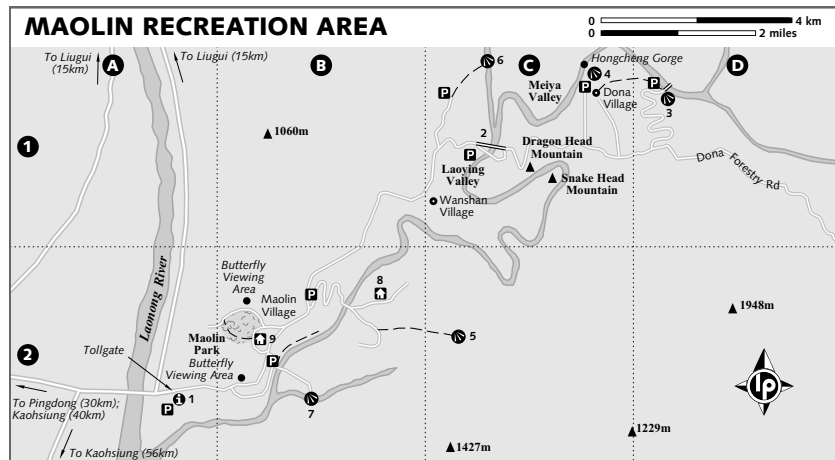
Trains between Kaohsiung and Pingdong (NT31, 25 minutes) run about every 15 minutes.

The **Pingdong Bus Company Station** (☎ 723 7131) is a block left of the train station as you exit. You can't miss it. Buses to Donggang (NT72, 40 minutes) run every 20 minutes. There are also buses to the Indigenous People's Culture Park (below).

SANDIMEN 三地門

☎ 08 / pop 2000

This small aboriginal community (Sāndìmén), an hour east of Pingdong, is well known for the **Indigenous People's Cultural Park** (台灣山地文化園區; Táiwan Shāndì Wénhuà Yuánqū; ☎ 799 1219; www.tacp.gov.tw; 104 Fongjin, Peipei Village, Majia; adult/child NT150/80; ☎ 8.30am-5pm, closed Mon). The park, set in forested mountains, covers a large area and is an excellent introduction to aboriginal



INFORMATION

Maolin National Scenic Area
Administration Office 茂林國家風景區管理處1 A2

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Dona High Suspension Bridge 多納高吊橋2 C1
Dona Hot Springs 多納溫泉3 D1
Hongcheng Gorge Hot Springs 紅塵峽谷4 C1
Maolin Gorge Waterfall 茂林峽谷瀑布5 C2
Meiyagu Waterfall 美雅谷瀑布6 C1
Qingren Valley Waterfall 情人谷瀑布7 B2

SLEEPING

De En Gorge Guesthouse 得恩谷民宿8 B2
Fungshan Agricultural Activity Centre 鳳山市農會茂林會員活動中心9 B2

THE BURNING OF THE WANG YEH BOATS *Robert Kelly*

In the old fishing town of **Donggang** (Dōnggǎng), Wang Yeh worship runs deep. Wang Yeh, a Tang dynasty scholar, is said to watch over the waters of southern China. To the Taiwanese, who largely descend from southern Chinese fisherman, his importance is eclipsed only by Matsu, the goddess of the sea, and protector of fishermen.

At the resplendent Donglong Temple (Dōnglóng Gòng) in Donggang, a very odd festival is held in Wang Yeh's honour every three years. It's a little like Burning Man, only with a boat.

The last **Boat Burning Festival** (王船祭; Wángchuánjì), or the Burning of the Wang Yeh Boats as it's often called, was held in 2006, and a few friends and I were fortunate enough to see the final event. The whole festival runs over an eight-day period. During this time, a 20m-long wooden boat (that had taken local craftsmen more than a year to build) is filled with replicas of houses, clothing, cars, horses and electrical appliances, as well as sacrificial offerings of food. On the final day, or rather, morning, the entire model is dragged to the beach through the main streets of Donggang, then hundreds of kilos of ghost paper are piled round. During a slow, elaborate ceremony that goes on for hours, local gods are called onto the boat. Sometimes the gods are reluctant and have to be persuaded to get aboard. (Can't say I blame them.)

During the 2006 festival, it took till almost 4am for all the gods to board the vessel. And then, as per tradition, the boat was set on fire.

Looking back, the time spent waiting for this moment was worthwhile, but at the time it was agonisingly tedious. It's a good idea to bring along a folding chair if you go, and maybe a book.

It's surprising how long the boat takes to really start burning once it has been lit. For the first 30 minutes you can stand pretty close. Afterwards the heat and smoke keep the crowds back, but this is also the time to get the best photos as it's easy to push your way to the front for a clear shot.

By dawn, most people have usually had enough and begin to set out, leaving the now gutted but still glowing hull behind. They also leave behind an unceremonious amount of garbage, which can now be seen clearly in the morning light. As my Taiwanese friend Kitty said upon witnessing the aftermath, 'It's a little like waking up, rolling over and thinking, "Wow! You looked a whole lot better last night!"'

The next boat burning is scheduled for autumn 2009. To get to Donggang take a Pingdong Bus Company bus (NT72, 40 minutes, every 20 minutes) from Pingdong.

culture in Taiwan. A useful English-language brochure (with map and events schedule) can be picked up at the reception area. The park's website is worth a look before you go.

Separate areas have been established to highlight the nine indigenous tribes. Each area features authentic, life-size displays of traditional houses and communal structures. You can walk around each area if you give yourself several hours, or you can ride the free shuttle buses that cruise the park every 10 minutes or so. The park also houses several interesting exhibitions and there are daily performances of aboriginal dancing, though the ones we saw were slightly tacky.

From Pingdong, buses to the park (NT65, one hour) run only on weekends. The first bus leaves at 8.40am. On weekdays take a bus to Sandimen (NT58) and then walk to the park (15 minutes) or take a taxi if you can find one.

From Sandimen it is possible to get further into the mountains to very remote aboriginal villages in the Maolin National Scenic Area (www.maulin-nsa.gov.tw).

JIN-SHUI YING OLD TRAIL**浸水營古道**

Part of the National Trail System (p329), this Qing dynasty path (Jinshui Yǐn Gǔ Dào) used to cross the entire southern part of the island. Today it still covers about half and takes a full six to seven hours of downhill walking to reach the end of the trail near Dawu on the east coast (it would be another two hours of walking to reach Dawu and the sea on back-country roads). Along the way you pass the remains of a Qing dynasty army camp and various other historical sights.

The trail runs along the point where the summer and winter monsoon airstreams

meet, and receives the second-highest rainfall in Taiwan (bring an umbrella). It's a jungle here and the relative remoteness of the trail and its long history means you have a good chance of spotting local wildlife, including the Formosan macaque, the Reeves muntjac, wild boar and over 80 species of bird.

To hike the trail you need a police permit (NT10). Contact the **Pintung Forestry Bureau** (☎ 08-733 8835) for information, including how to arrange a van in **Fangliao** (枋寮) to take you to the trailhead and pick you up on the other side. You can catch a train to Fangliao from Kaohsiung (fast/slow train NT109/66, one/1½ hours) every hour or so.

LITTLE LIUCHIU ISLAND (HSIAO LIUCHIU ISLAND) 小琉球

☎ 08 / pop 13,000

This pretty coral island (Xiǎo Liúqiú Yǔ), no more than 5km long, offers more than enough sea vistas, convoluted caves, sandy beaches and odd rock formations to keep you happy for a long, long day. Best of all, it's simple to get to and around.

Winter is a great time to visit as the weather is still in the mid-20°C range but the place is practically deserted (at least midweek).

Information

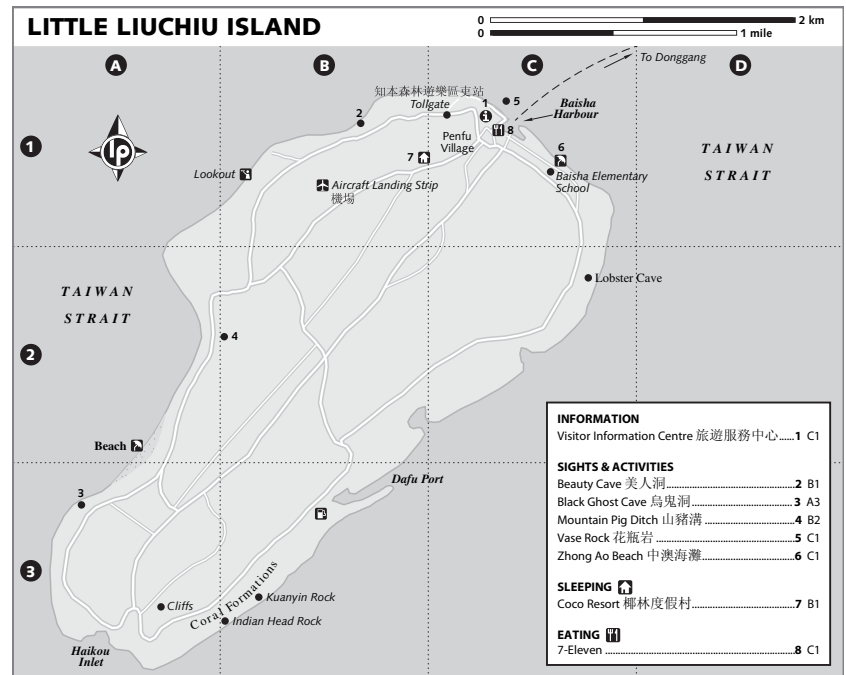
There's a new **visitor information centre** (☎ 861 4615; ☎ 9am-5pm) just above Lingshan Temple on the cliff. Very little English is spoken but the view is good up here.

Little Liuchiu Island is part of the Dapeng Bay National Scenic Area; check out the website (www.tbnsa.gov.tw) for more information.

Sights & Activities

You can ride around the island on a scooter in about 30 minutes but give yourself at least half a day. This island was made for exploring.

Some attractions to look out for are **Vase Rock** (Huāpíng Yán), a giant eroded coral with a thin base and large head, **Black Ghost Cave** (Wūguǐ Dòng; admission NT120; ☎ 8am-5pm) and **Beauty Cave** (Měirén Dòng; admission NT120; ☎ 8am-5pm). For the bloody stories behind these names check out www.sinica.edu.tw/tit/scenery/0496_Hsiao.html.



Other must-sees include the narrow, twisting, root-strangled coral passageways at **Mountain Pig Ditch** (Shān Zhū Gōu) and **Lingshan Temple** (Lingshān Sì), just up from the pier. The temple offers, like several others around the island, fine clear views across Taiwan Strait.

The best place for a swim is at **Zhong Ao Beach** (Zhōng Áo Hǎitān). The beach at Vase Rock is nice for wading as you search for sea life, and the tiny but picturesque stretch of shell-sand beach before Black Ghost Cave makes for a sweet picnic spot. You can go for a dip here as well, but only up to your knees. Be sure to wear something on your feet if you go in the water as the coral rocks can really cut you up. Also, don't go more than 20m to 30m from shore unless you are wearing fins. There is a nasty undertow around the island.

Sleeping & Eating

There are several inexpensive hotels around the village at Baisha Harbour (Báishā Mǎtóu) with rooms for NT1000 or less should you decide to stay a night. For something a little nicer, try the quaint **Coco Resort** (Yēlín Dùjiācūn; ☎ 861 4368; 20-38 Minzu Rd; 2-/4-person cabins NT2200/3200), a minute's scooter ride up a quiet lane.

The village at Baisha Harbour has many small restaurants. You can eat expensive fresh seafood or simple stir-fries for less than NT100. There is also a 7-Eleven in the village where you can buy sandwiches and drinks.

Getting There & Away

From Pingdong, catch a bus to Donggang (NT72, 40 minutes, every 20 minutes). The bus will first stop in town and then proceed to the harbour ferry terminals. There are two ferry terminals on the right before the fish market and both offer trips to Little Liuchiu Island. The first terminal is the one we recommend. Boats to Baisha Harbour on Little Liuchiu Island (return NT410, 30 minutes) leave every hour in the morning (first ferry at 7am) and every 1½ hours in the afternoon. The last boat back to Donggang leaves at 5pm or 6pm, depending on the season.

Getting Around

The island is only 9km around so you could easily walk it in a day. Scooters (half/full day NT150/300) can be rented as soon as

you get off the ferry at the spiffy new dock or even before you get on the boat at Donggang from the local touts. Don't worry, they are legitimate.

KENTING NATIONAL PARK

墾丁國家公園

☎ 08

It's the end of the road down here, but there's nothing remote or isolated at all about Kenting National Park (Kèndìng Guójiā Gōngyuán). Over 5 million visitors a year flock here to swim, surf, snorkel, dive, visit museums, hike, visit hot springs, eat good food and enjoy a little nightlife. And they do so all year round. The average January temperature is 21°C (many days are much warmer). Unless a cold front has hit the island, you can usually swim even year round. In July it can get to a scorching 38°C.

The park occupies the entire southern tip of Taiwan, an area known as the Hengchun Peninsula. Low mountains and hilly terraces prevail over much of the land, along with, in a few places, rugged high cliffs and sandy deserts. The swimming beaches won't stun you with their beauty like those in Thailand, but they are lovely nonetheless, with yellow sands and turquoise waters. All in all, the topography is wonderfully suited for recreation, in particular cruising around sightseeing on a scooter.

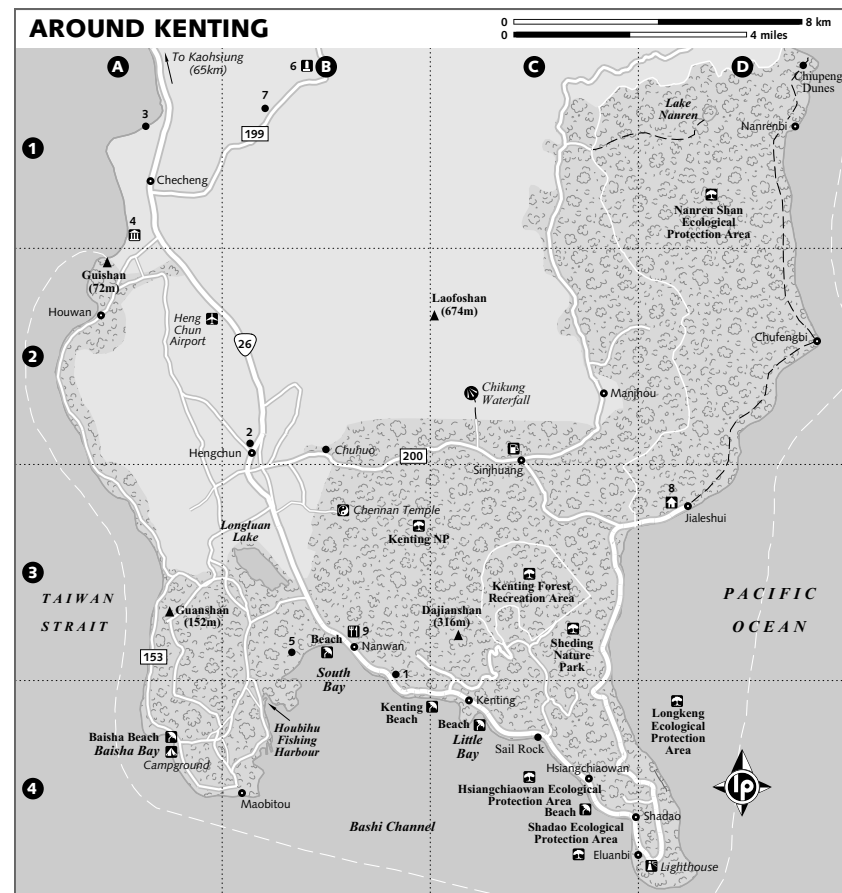
In many ways, the park gets better every year, but also worse. You can no longer just pitch a tent anywhere, but now fireworks are banned on the beaches. There's a greater emphasis on cleanliness but with more and more travellers visiting, some places are trashed during the busy season (summer and Chinese New Year). The main street in Kenting Village is looking better, but there's still no plan for a pavement.

Suffice to say, some love it here for what there is, while some do not for what there isn't.

Orientation

The national park covers a large area (18,000 hectares) but as there are few major roads it is easy to get around with our map in hand. The majority of people stay in Kenting Village. There are literally dozens of hotels here as well as scores of restaurants, bars and assorted shops.

Those looking for a quieter atmosphere should consider staying further down the



peninsula at Sail Rock or Eluanbi. Surfers and beach bums will probably like Nanwan or Jialeshui.

Information

There's free wireless internet at the National Park Headquarters and the McDonald's on Kenting Rd. There are ATMs in the 7-Elevens in Kenting Village on the main road.

Kenting National Park (www.ktnp.gov.tw) The official website is more than thorough in its introduction to the park. **National Park Headquarters** (Map p283; ☎ 886 1321; 946 No 596, Kenting Rd; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) You'll find English-speaking staff and several useful English brochures and maps. The centre is a few kilometres north of Kenting so you'll probably need to check into your hotel and rent a scooter before visiting.

INFORMATION

National Park Headquarters
國家公園管理處.....1 B3

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Dashan Hot Spring Spa 大山溫泉農場.....(see 7)
East Gate 東門.....2 B2
Haikou Sand Dunes 海口沙丘.....3 A1
National Museum of Marine Biology
國立海洋生物博物館.....4 A1
Nuclear Power Plant 核能發電廠.....5 B3
Shihmen Historical Battlefield 石門古戰場.....6 B1
Sichongshi Hot Spring 四重溪溫泉.....7 B1

SLEEPING

Beach House 海邊.....(see 9)
Winson House.....8 D3

EATING

Waves Kitchen 波浪廚房.....9 B3

Sights

Must-sees include **Kenting Forest Recreation Area** (Kéngdīng Sēnlín Yóulè Qū; Map p283; admission NT100; ☎ 8am-5pm), with its limestone caves and botanical gardens, and **Jialeshui** (Jiālèshuǐ; Map p283; admission NT100; ☎ 8am-5pm), a 2.5km-long stretch of coral coastline with rocks eroded into the shapes of animals.

The **National Museum of Marine Biology** (Guóli Hǎiyáng Shēngwù Bówùguǎn; Map p283; ☎ 882 5001; www2.nmmba.gov.tw; 2 Houwan Rd, Checheng; adult/child NT300/200; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat & Sun, 8am-7pm Jul & Aug) is also rated highly for the live displays of colourful and exotic sea life that are professionally and imaginatively designed.

The park maintains strict access controls to ecologically sensitive regions, such as the area around **Lake Nanren** (Nánrén Hú; Map p283) and the fine shell beach at **Shadao** (Shādǎo; Map p283). You can apply for permits on the park's website to enter these areas ahead of time.

Activities

SWIMMING

Taiwan is a volcanic island, which means the land rises steeply from the sea and the ocean begins to drop not far offshore. As a result, the waters just offshore have treacherous currents and undertows. Some sound advice from a long-term expat is not to go out much further than you can stand.

Kenting Beach (Map p284), the longest swimming beach in the area, is now free to the public. You can enter via the campsite off Dawan Rd.

The beach across from the Caesar Park Hotel is smaller but set in picture-perfect **Little Bay** (Xiǎo Wān; Map p284). There's a beach bar and showers (free for Caesar Park guests, a nominal fee for others).

Nanwan (Nánwān; Map p283) sees a few too many jet skis for our liking, though there is a roped-off swimming-only area now.

The sweet little crescent beach at **Baisha Bay** (Báishā Wān; Map p283) is a little further afield but worth taking the extra time to visit. It is not as unvisited as years ago, but it is still the least crowded.

In recent years, jumping off the chin (and other protuberances) of **Sail Rock** (Chuánfán Shí; Map p283), aka Nixon Rock, has become quite popular.

SURFING, SNORKELLING & SCUBA DIVING

The waters around **Jialeshui** (Jiālèshuǐ; Map p283; admission NT100; ☎ 8am-5pm) and the nuclear power plant (Map p283) at **Nanwan** have the best surfing waves. You can rent boards (NT500 to NT800 per day) in Jialeshui at Winson House (opposite), in Nanwan at Beach House (p286) or at numerous shops along Kenting Rd.

For snorkelling, check out the coral formations near **Sail Rock**. You can rent gear across the road. If you want to scuba dive, check out one of the shops in Nanwan.

BOATING

There are sea tours from **Houbihu** (後壁湖; Hòubíhú; Map p283) for NT400 for two hours. No reservations are required and there are no

fixed schedules. Just show up during spring or summer days.

BIRD-WATCHING

With its grasslands, forests, lakes and coastline, Kenting is a prime bird-watching area, and the National Park Headquarters has several good brochures on the species you may encounter. For the casual birder, **Longluan Lake**, **Eluanbi**, **Sheding Nature Park** and **Manjhough** (all Map p283) are considered prime spots.

Among the more famous birds to sail the Kenting skies are the migratory goshawks and grey-faced buzzards. Early to mid September the goshawks start arriving on their journey south to Indochina. The best time to see them is morning in Sheding Nature Park. As many as 200,000 fly by in 20 days.

Around October 10 (National Day) about 20,000 grey-faced buzzards pass through the park also on their way to Indochina. The best place to see them is Manjhough between 3pm and 6pm. Sadly, as many as 2000 buzzards are poached every season for food.

Festivals & Events

Indie music fans should definitely try to time their Taiwan visit for April when **Spring Scream** (www.springscream.com) takes over Kenting. It's the longest-running music festival in the country, now in its midteens. The multistaged musical event brings together names big and small in Taiwan's indie music scene, along with a few imported bands. In 2007 there was a change of venue from the old Liou Fu Campground, so check out the website for the location of future events.

Sleeping

Bookings are advisable if there's a particular hotel you wish to stay at. Otherwise, it's possible, even during Chinese New Year, to just show up and find accommodation. Kenting Rd and Dawan Rd are filled with budget and midrange accommodation.

At Sail Rock you'll find a number of small, nondescript hotels and a few restaurants across the street from the water. Prices are similar to Kenting Village.

Summer (approximately May to September), Chinese New Year and other public holidays are considered the high season. Discounts of 40% or more for midrange and top-end hotels are standard on weekdays and during the low season.

BUDGET

At the time of writing there were two camping grounds (*lüyíngqū*) at Baisha beach on either end of the bay. By the time you read this, however, the park have bought the land they stood on and started building its own camp sites. In Kenting Village, a camping ground just back from the beach off Dawan Rd was being reconstructed at the time of writing. It looked to be an ideal place to stay.

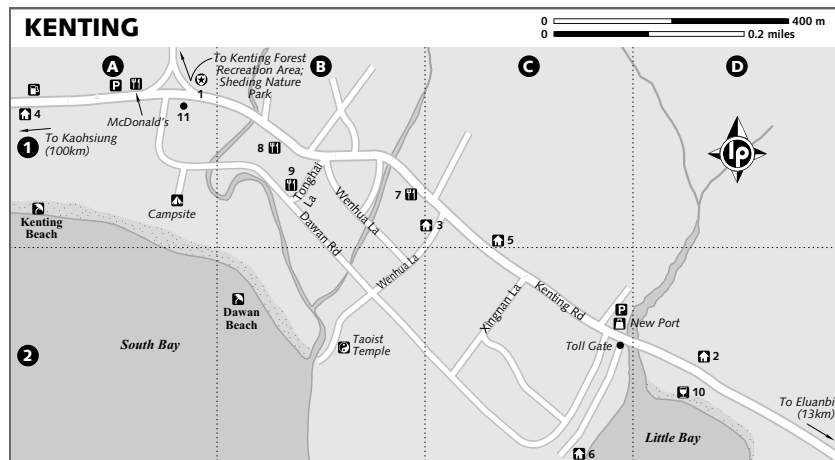
Winson House (Map p283; ☎ 880 1053; www.tbay.com.tw; 244 Chashan Rd; 滿州鄉茶山山路244號; dm/s/d NT300/800/1200) Just 100m before the entrance to Jialeshui is this B&B-style place run by Winson, a well-known local surfer. Lessons (NT2000 a day) and equipment rental (board NT800 a day) are available. The surfing beach, which is considered the best in the Kenting area, is literally just down the hill from the house.

Catholic Hostel (Tiānzhǔjiào Huódòng Zhōngxīn; Map p284; ☎ 886 1540; fax 886 1352; 2 Wenhua Lane; 文化路2號; d/tw NT1200/2000) The hostel is immaculately clean and a close walk to the swimming beaches. There's a dorm, but only for groups.

MIDRANGE

Hotel California (Jiǎzhōu Lǔdiàn; Map p284; ☎ 886 1588; www.hotelca.idv.tw; 40 Kenting Rd; 墾丁路40號; d NT2000; ☎) With its brightly coloured rooms, and surf-shop décor (it's run by a local surfer), the California is a good place to stay if you want a bit of character. Dorm rooms for four to eight people (NT3000/5000) are also available.

Kenting Youth Activity Centre (Kéngdīng Qīngnián Huódòng Zhōngxīn; Map p284; ☎ 886 1221; 17 Kenting Rd;



INFORMATION

National Park Police 國家公園警察隊.....1 A1

SLEEPING

Caesar Park Hotel 凱撒大飯店.....2 D2
Catholic Hostel 天主教活動中心.....3 C1
Chateau Beach Resort 夏都沙灘酒店.....4 A1
Hotel California 加州旅店.....5 C1
Kenting Youth Activity Centre 青年活動中心.....6 C2

EATING

Amy's Cucina 南星大飯店.....7 B1
Lu Nan 旅南話海鮮 夏都沙灘酒店.....8 B1
Warung Didi 迪迪小吃.....9 B1

DRINKING

Caesar Park Hotel 凱撒大飯店.....10 D2

TRANSPORT

Scooter Hire 機車出租店.....11 A1

墾丁路17號; d/tw from NT2500/3000) The centre occupies 25 hectares of land and features a reproduced traditional Fujian-style courtyard dwelling for guests to sleep in. The centre will appeal to families, not only for the rather fun design (kids just love playing around the old-style buildings) but because it's on its own secluded road.

Beach House (Hǎibiān; Map p283; ☎ 888 0440; www.beach.idv.tw; 230 Nanwan Rd, Nanwan; 南灣 南灣路 230號; d/tw 3200/4000) Also run by local surfers. Rooms are small but brightly painted and the upper-floor rooms have excellent views over the ocean. Nice friendly vibe here and suitable even for older travellers.

TOP END

While there's no doubt the top-end hotels in Kenting have lovely rooms and excellent facilities, we do find them overpriced considering the level of the rest of Kenting (that place that exists outside the hotel) is fair to middling.

Chateau Beach Resort (Xiàdù Shātān Jiùdiàn; Map p284; ☎ 886 2345; 451 Kenting Rd; 墾丁路451號; r from NT6100; 📶) There's a light, breezy, whimsical feel to the pastel-coloured Chateau, making it a nice contrast to the posh Caesar. The Chateau sits right on the beach and you pay for this access – overall the rooms are nothing special. A new wing was opening at the time of writing and the rooms here promised higher standards (and considerably higher prices). In the off season 40% discounts usually apply.

Caesar Park Hotel (Kǎisà Dà Fāndiàn; Map p284; ☎ 886 1888; fax 886 1818; 6 Kenting Rd; 墾丁路6號; d/tw NT10,560/12,980; 📶) The Caesar has a swanky new Southeast Asian design and a new price tag to go with it. Hotel features include a spa, business centre and a fine new supervised children's play area (with storytelling at night). If you want a room in summer you'd better book at least two months in advance. In winter, weekday rates go as low as NT4600 per night.

DON'T EAT THE FISH!

The national park administration asks that visitors refrain from eating coral fish because fishing is damaging the reefs. You can recognise coral fish easily by their bright colours.

Eating

Kenting is a tourist town and there is no shortage of food, including Thai, Chinese, Yunan, Italian and even South African. Most places are open late.

There are a couple of breakfast shops and fruit-drink stands along Kenting Rd. The breakfasts at the Caesar Park Hotel (NT462) have long been popular.

Warung Didi (Dídí Xiǎochí; Map p284; ☎ 886 1835; 176 Dawan Rd; dishes NT200; 🕒 5.30pm-1am, closed Tue) The service can be spotty, and the place can be costly (NT300 for a curry and the rice is extra?) but Didi draws in the crowds every night with the promise of Thai and Malay curries, good music, beer and a lively beach-hut atmosphere. Reservations are recommended on weekends.

Amy's Cucina (Nánxing Dàfāndiàn; Map p284; ☎ 197 7131, ext 1; 131-1 Kenting Rd; dishes NT200; 🕒 10am-midnight Oct-May, 10am-2am Jun-Sep) This was the first place in Kenting to serve pizza and it's still got some of the best Italian food in the park. The casual redbrick- and wood-design makes it suitable for hanging out and enjoying a nice meal.

Waves Kitchen (Bōlàng Cāntīng; Map p283; ☎ 888 3399; 212 Nanwan Rd; dishes NT200; 🕒 noon-10pm, later on Sat) A stylish new restaurant off Nanwan beach, with a decent menu serving well-prepared seafood, pasta and sandwiches.

Lu Nan Seafood (Lǔ Nán Huó Hǎixiān; Map p284; ☎ 886 1036; 193 Kenting Rd; dishes NT500-1000; 🕒 noon-10pm). Recommended by locals for its fresh, delicious seafood. The place has all the atmosphere of an airplane hanger but that's not why people come here.

Drinking

Many restaurants, such as Warung Didi, Amy's Cucina and The Waves Kitchen also serve as bars (beer from NT120), often with good music played loudly in the evenings. The Caesar Hotel runs an **outdoor bar-café** (Map p284; beer from NT90; 🕒 9am-6pm weekday, 9am-10pm weekends, later in summer) on Little Bay beach (separate from the hotel premises).

Getting There & Away

AIR

TransAsia Airways (☎ 02-2972 4599), **Mandarin Airlines** (☎ 02-2717 1188) and **Uni Air** (☎ 07-801 0189) all have flights to **Heng Chun Airport** (Map p283; www.hca.gov.tw/english/default.htm) from Taipei. While Heng Chun is much closer to Kenting

than Kaohsiung (a 20- to 30-minute drive), you will still need to catch a bus or taxi to complete your journey. Note there are no shuttle buses between the airport and Kenting. You have to walk out onto the main road and wait for a Kenting Express Bus to come by.

BUS

From Kaohsiung catch the 'Kenting Express' (two-hour ride NT342, three-hour ride NT298, every hour) from the Kaohsiung Bus Company station or the airport.

FERRY

Ferries are said to leave from Houbihu Harbour for Lanyu during the summer months.

Getting Around

The only way to get around Kenting is with your own transport. There are no buses of any kind except those coming in from Kaohsiung and Heng Chun. Any hotel can arrange car, jeep or scooter hire. Most travellers use scooters and as you enter town there are scooter-hire shops (NT400 to NT500 per day) to the right.

SICHONGSI HOT SPRINGS

四重溪溫泉

☎ 08

One of the pleasures of a trip to Kenting is the sheer variety of things to see and do. Outside the park boundaries, but still accessible by car or scooter, is the hot-spring village of Sichongsi (Sichóngxi). While you may not want to visit hot springs during the summer months, a soak in an outdoor pool with a clear starry sky above on a cool winter evening is a real treat. There are numerous hotels, many with modern facilities, including differ-

ent temperature pools, spa jets and showers. You can stay overnight but most people just come for a few hours.

Recommended by Kenting locals is **Dashan Hot Spring Spa** (Dàshān Wēnquán Nóngchǎng; Map p283; ☎ 882 5725; 60-1 Tamei Rd, Wenquan Village; unlimited time NT200; 🕒 6am-11pm). The spa is at the far end of the village. Drive until you are almost out of town and turn left 30m or so before the strange castlelike building. Follow the road about 1km and then turn onto a dirt road marked with a sign in Chinese for the hotel.

To get to Sichongsi, follow Hwy 26 almost as far as Checheng (車城; Chēchéng) and turn right onto County Rd 199. Sichongsi is a few kilometres down the highway and is the first real settlement you pass through. It's about 32km to Sichongsi from Kenting.

SHUANGLIOU FOREST RECREATION AREA 雙流森林遊樂區

It's well worth continuing down County Rd 199 east of Sichongsi. Along the way, you will pass the **Shihmen Historical Battlefield** (Shímén Gǔzhàn Chǎng; Map p283) and be rewarded with a varying landscape of ponds, aboriginal villages, mountains and open fields.

Just before the coast, you have the choice of taking Spur Route 199 to the photogenic **grasslands** and **hot springs** around Shuihai (Xùhǎi), or continuing up the 199 to Hwy 9 and turning left to reach **Shuangliou Forest Recreation Area** (Shuāng Liú Sēnlín Yóulè Qū; ☎ 08-870 1394; http://recreate.forest.gov.tw; adult/child NT100/50; 🕒 8am-5pm).

The park has two main walking trails, one to the gorgeous **Shuangliou Waterfall** (雙流瀑布; Shuāngliú Pùbù; two hours return) and the other to 630m **Mautzu Mountain** (帽子山; Mǎuzi Shān; three hours return). Both trails begin near the visitor centre and are marked with English signs.

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