

*Winter / Spring*

# PENGGHU

*The Allure of Monsoon Time in Penghu*





# Tourist Map of Penghu



Mudouyu



Map not drawn to scale

## Route: Flying Time

- Taipei—Magong: 60 minutes
- Taichung—Magong: 35 minutes
- Chiayi—Magong: 30 minutes
- Tainan—Magong: 25 minutes
- Kaohsiung—Magong: 35 minutes
- Kaohsiung—Cimei: 45 minutes
- Kaohsiung—Wangan: 60 minutes

— Ferry Boat Route



**P**enghu is closer than you might think; the distance between Magong airport and most of Taiwan's west-coast cities makes the term "middle of everywhere" fairly literal. Penghu is about 30 minutes from cities in central and southern Taiwan, and only a bit further from Taipei's Songshan Airport. Remember that summer is high season; so if you're planning your trip between June and September, reserve your seat in advance.

Most major cities have several flights a day to Penghu, and single travelers (and even those traveling in groups of three or less) are often able to get on wait-listed flights. Though it's best to reserve a seat in advance, those with flexible schedules are encouraged to try for wait-listed seats even on "fully booked" planes.

### About Penghu

The Penghu Archipelago is made up of islands situated in the Taiwan Strait astride the Tropic of Cancer. Penghu has but one city —Magong (previously almost always spelled "Makung")— and five townships (Husi, Baisha, Siyu, Cimei, and Wangan), and is easily explored by a combination of boat and motorcycle (or even bicycle by those with the energy). The topography of Penghu is amazingly diverse, offering nearly 450 kilometers of coastline featuring everything from stunning basalt cliffs to beautiful white-sand beaches. Though separated from Taiwan by the Strait, Penghu is easy to get to from just about anywhere; Chiayi is the Taiwanese city closest to Penghu, and Magong is less than a 50-minute flight from all major Taiwanese cities.



### Wind

From October to March, the feature that best defines Penghu is the strong winds which race through the Taiwan Strait and over the archipelago. Though mostly absent during the summer, the winter winds on Penghu are quite strong, making it a paradise for windsurfers. Though summer is the high season for tourism, Penghu receives visitors year-round, drawn to the area's unique culture, excellent seafood, and ever-present beauty.

### Temperature

At 23 degrees Celsius, the average temperature in Penghu is fairly mild. Summers get very hot, with the average daytime temperature in June being around 33 degrees Celsius. Evenings are a bit milder, with average summer evening temperatures hovering around 28 Celsius.

### The Gaillardia Islands

As the fierce winds of winter begin to subside and the weather begins to turn warmer in spring, the grasslands of the Penghu Islands lose their brown cover and burst forth in a riot of blossoms, red in the center and yellow at the edges. This is the gaillardia (*Gaillardia pulchella*), also known as the firewheel, Indian blanket, blanket flower, and sundance. It was originally native to the central United States, where the dry, harsh conditions under which it evolved fitted it well to life in Penghu. It has proliferated here, becoming such a dominant plant that it has been named the county flower—and Penghu itself has been nicknamed "Gaillardia Islands." The flower symbolizes the spirit of Penghu—the ability to survive under difficult circumstances.

### Precipitation

Arid and subtropical, Penghu gets only a little rainfall throughout the year. Though infrequent, winter storms drench the archipelago in short bursts; summers tend to be even dryer, though afternoon cloudbursts are not unheard of. Overall, Penghu gets about 1000mm of rainfall per year.

### Tides

As a nautical community, knowledge of Penghu's tidal cycle has long been crucial to Penghu's fisherman, sailors, and others who make their living from the ocean. More recently, surfers have taken to logging onto the Central Weather Bureau's website ([www.cwb.gov.tw](http://www.cwb.gov.tw)) to get up-to-the-minute information on weather, tides, wind speed and more.



The gaillardia



# A Fiery Birth

*The Penghu Archipelago was born of volcanic action, when lava was forced from deep within the earth to rise above the surface of the water. The result was almost 100 islands, most of them very small and all except one formed of basalt (the single exception is andesite, the material of Huayu, or Flower Island). After reaching the surface, most of the lava cooled quickly and contracted, forming jointed rock in the geometrically shaped basalt columns that make up many of Penghu's most representative and spectacular geologic formations. Most of the islands, which together total a land area of only 127 square kilometers, remain unpopulated today.*

**T**o learn about the geology of the Penghu islands, pay a visit to the Siaomen Geological Museum. This small but interesting and well-organized establishment is located on the little island of Siaomen, which is connected by bridge to Siyu (West Island), the westernmost of the three main islands that form the "horseshoe" of Penghu. Good English-language explanations are provided for many of the displays, which include sea, plant, and animal life as well as geology.

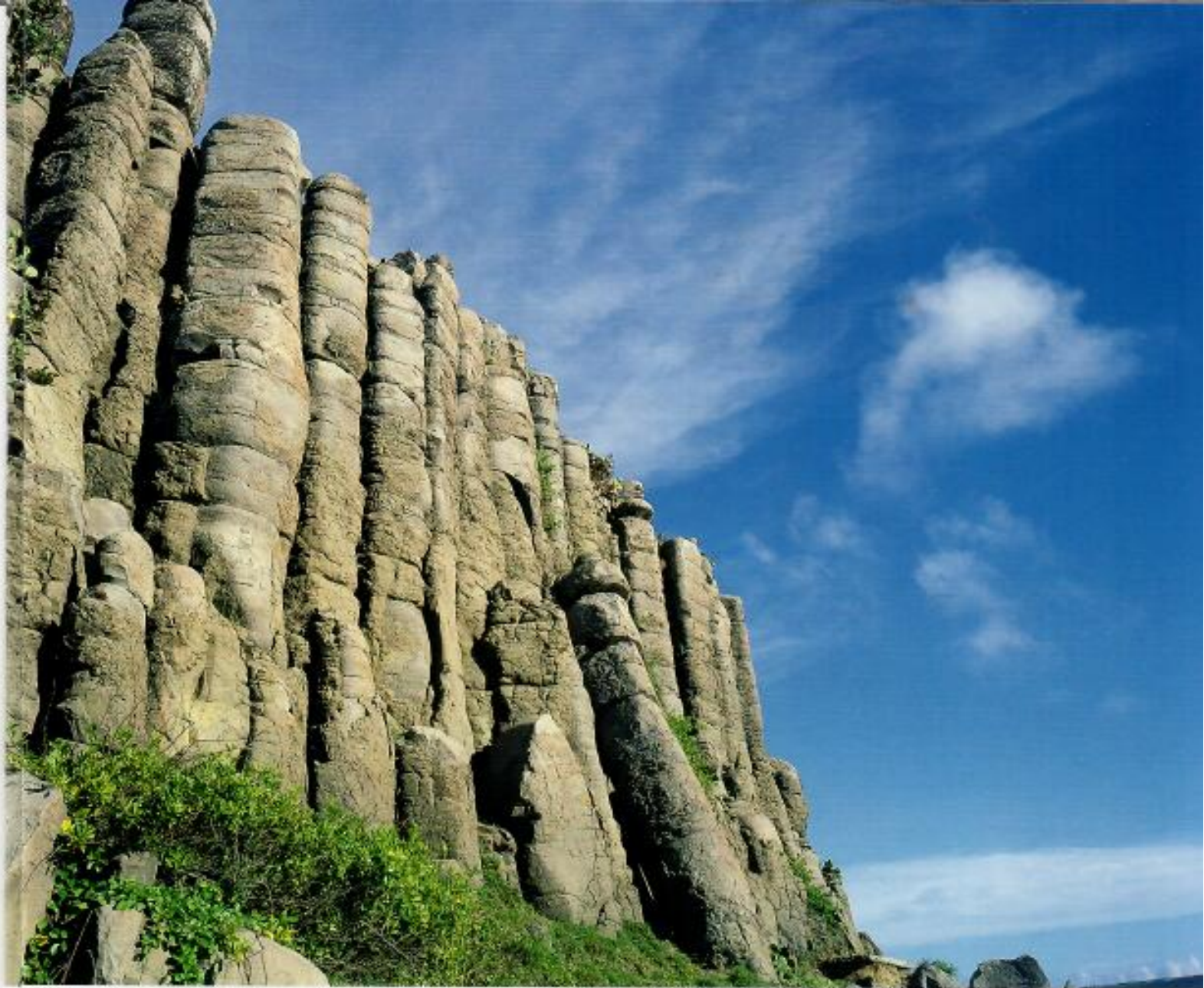
Although it covers an area of just half a square kilometer, Siaomen has a variety of geological forms that make the whole islet a veritable museum with displays of basalt columns, basalt bedrock, layers of sedimentary coquina rock (con-

taining fossils), quartz sandstone, sand and gravel beaches, and basalt in many other shapes—sphere-like, foliated, granular, honeycomb, plate-like. Embedded in the basalt you might also see deposits of veined-stone agate, Penghu's beautifully patterned and colored semi-precious stone. But the most famous sight here is a formation called Whale Cave, which is not a cave at all but a sea-eroded arch in a columnar basalt formation that has some resemblance to the head of a whale, the hole being its eye.



Whale Cave





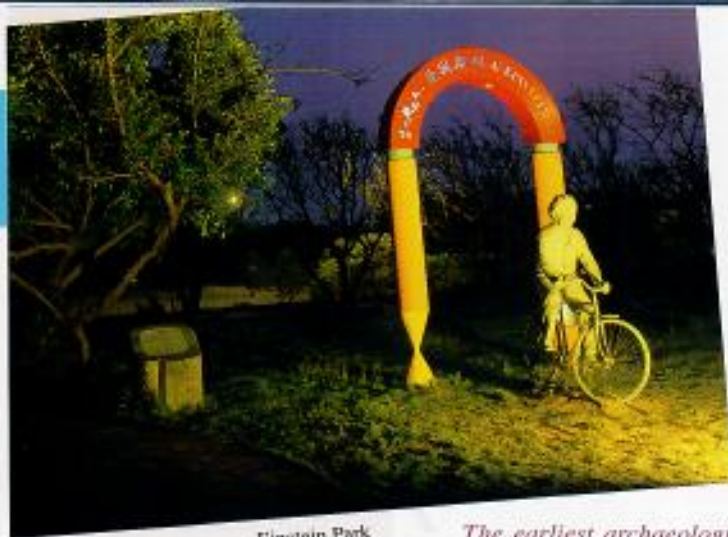
Basalt columns on Siaomen



Siaomen Geological Museum



Basalt columns on Chihsi



Einstein Park

# The Earliest Arrivals

*The earliest archaeological evidence (primarily pottery) of human habitation indicates that human beings first arrived on the islands about 5,000 years ago; speculation has it that these people came from southwestern Taiwan, and were a short-statured race that has long since disappeared from both Penghu and Taiwan proper. They were not related to the indigenous peoples who remain in Taiwan. (Interestingly, several of Taiwan's indigenous tribes have legends about short, dark-skinned people.) More of them arrived around 4,000 years ago; but for about 3,000 years after that, according to the archaeological record as so far discovered, the islands were without human inhabitants.*

**H**an Chinese from the coastal areas of southern Fujian Province began arriving in Penghu in the 9th or 10th century. They were short-term immigrants who used the islands as a base for fishing. Historical records give the first clear statement of definite Han Chinese settlements in the islands in 1171, and the Chinese imperial court first established a military inspectorate for Penghu in 1281 - 403 years before a similar post was set up for Taiwan proper. In addition to fishing, these earliest settlers developed animal husbandry and then crop farm-

ing. These remain the principal agricultural occupations of the islands' people even today.

The fierce dry winds that scour the islands for half the year turn everything brown and make life difficult for most plants to flourish. The larger trees you see are species that have been introduced to serve windbreak or ornamental purposes (such as the casuarinas that grace Lintou Park); and even the indigenous trees, such as banyan, do not grow very tall.



Penghu Reclamation Hall

Strong winds, and the salt that they carry, make it hard for farmers to grow crops. But not quite impossible, and the local folk have adapted to the harsh local conditions by planting in small, squarish fields surrounded by walls of coral stone as protection against the wind. This works, to an extent, and allows farmers to grow the produce that is

intimately associated with the islands: peanuts, honeydew melons, loofah gourds, watermelons, some vegetables. Perhaps the most unique product of the islands is the fruit of the cactus, which is made into drinks and even ice cream.



The best-preserved network of these walled fields (the locals call them "vegetable houses") is on the little island of Siaomen. You can also see some of them during your visit

to the restored traditional village of Erkan on the island of Siyu.



Peanut field



"vegetable houses"—stone-walled fields in Siaomen



Cage net aquaculture



Busy season for fishermen

Animal husbandry is still practiced, and the herds of cattle and flocks of goats that graze in the expansive grasslands of Siyu present visitors with unexpected sights of bucolic tranquility. In Penghu you can even see the sight, extremely rare on Taiwan proper these days, of farm women cultivating their tiny fields with plows pulled by oxen. The women you see working in the fields or around the fishing harbors here frequently cover themselves from head to toe in clothing and face wraps as protection against the wind and the sun, leaving only a narrow slit for the eyes.

For island men, fishing is the traditional occupation. You can get an intimate glimpse into the lives of the local fisher folk by going down to any one of the almost countless fishing harbors that dot the coastlines of Penghu and watching the fishermen unload the catch from their small boats, mend their nets, repair their vessels, or prepare to weigh anchor for another fishing trip. The fishermen generally do not mind you watching them, so long as your behavior is properly respectful.

With fishing being such a dangerous occupation, and with some of the fish stock in the open sea being somewhat depleted these days, many of Penghu's fishermen have turned to growing their own fish (including the local specialty, cobia) in net cages that float in inshore waters. This provides a certain supply of fish and makes it easier to harvest them. It also makes it easier for tourists to participate in fishing activities, using either hooks or nets.







A tourist enjoys going local

One of the places where you can do this most conveniently is on the small island of Yuanbei ("Round Shell"), just a few minutes by boat off the coast of Baisha Island. Local operators here have become involved in the tourist trade, offering a variety of fishery-based experiences such as fishing, playing with cuttlefish, and dining on the catch straight from the sea. Professional guides here will also take you on an educational tour of the intertidal zone, the area of shoreline that lies between the high- and low-water marks. The intertidal zone is a resource-rich natural marine classroom where you can observe such creatures of the sea as starfish, seashells, crabs, sea urchins, and small finned fish that have been left in pools as the tide retreated. This is where you can also find laver and other edible seaweed; in fact, when the time and tide are right, you can see large

numbers of colorfully dressed women harvesting seaweed in the intertidal zone.

Yuanbei is also notable for its cultural and geologic features. Students from Taipei National Art University run an art village on the island. Its northern coast is rimmed with basalt columns, and on the east coast there are rows of fan-shaped formations that look remarkably like basalt pleated skirts.



Harvesting the intertidal zone on Yuanbei



Tourists and cuttlefish on Yuanbei



The All Nations Wall at Erkan

# Modern Manifestations of Ancient Culture

*When the earliest permanent residents settled in the Penghu Islands a thousand or so years ago, they housed themselves in structures built of materials they found locally. Since there was virtually no wood available, they chose coral rocks that were available in abundance from the surrounding seas to build the walls of their homes and their "vegetable houses." This material, called laogushih, is still much in evidence today, although the material of choice for new buildings is now concrete.*

*Earlier settlers came mostly from Quanzhou and Zhangzhou in southern Fujian Province, and they tended to settle together with their relatives in clan groups. As a result, many Penghu villages are inhabited by just two or three clans, or maybe only one. It is not unusual to find a village in which, even now, practically all of the inhabitants bear a single surname.*

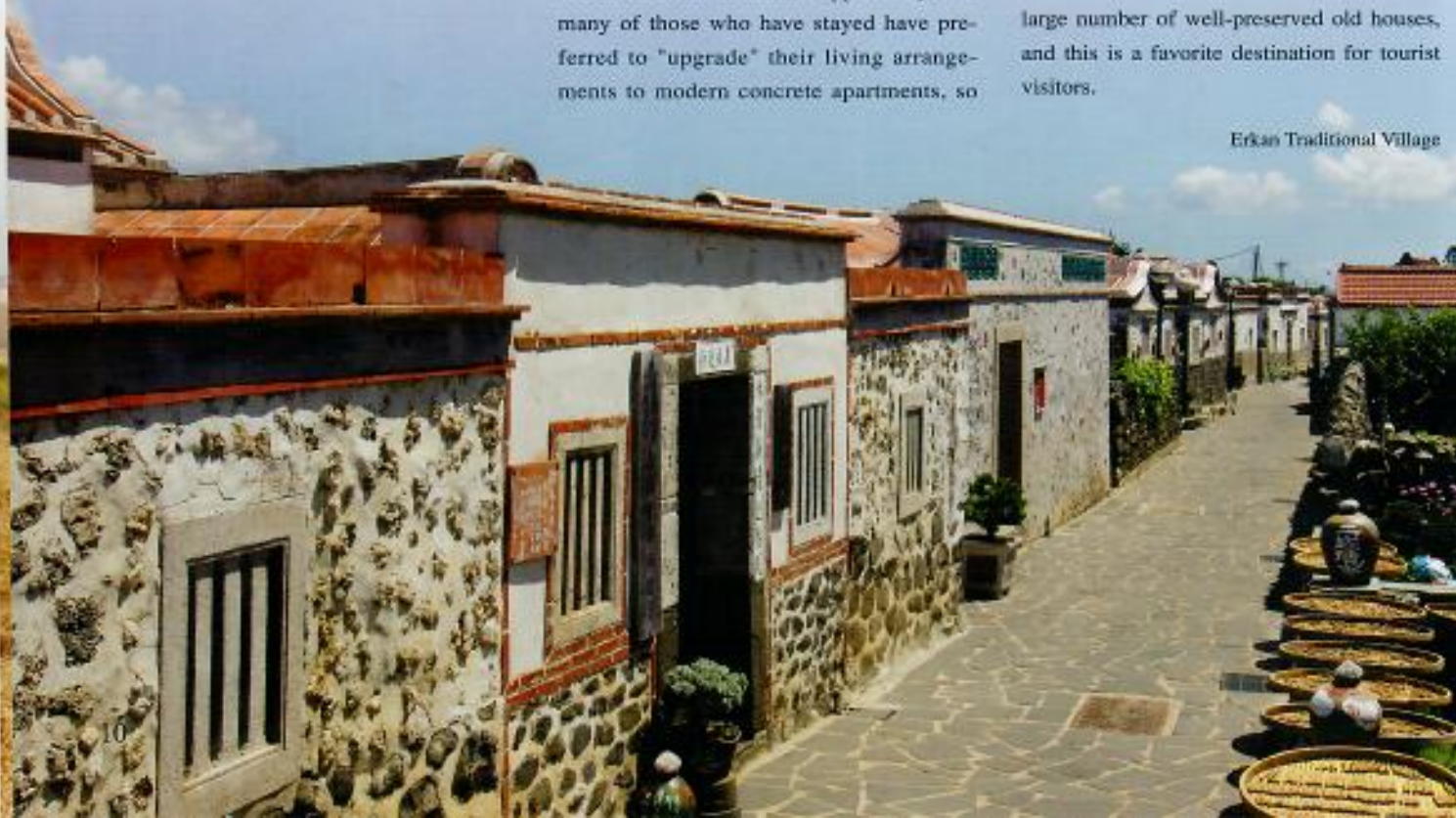


Laogushih

The old-style laogushih houses are scattered around the islands. Since many Penghu people have moved away to Taiwan (or points farther afield) in search of better economic opportunity, and many of those who have stayed have preferred to "upgrade" their living arrangements to modern concrete apartments, so

most of the old laogushih houses are neglected and falling to pieces. Plenty of them are still left, though, to provide a glimpse into the way the island people used to live. The village of Zhongshe on Wangan Island (site of the famous Green Sea Turtle Tourism and Conservation Center) has a large number of well-preserved old houses, and this is a favorite destination for tourist visitors.

Erkan Traditional Village





A more interesting option is available closer to Magong, however, at the Erkan Traditional Village on the island of Siyu. Here, the villagers—practically all surnamed Chen—have

banded together to preserve their old houses, their old ways, and their old crafts by transforming their settlement into a tourist attraction—with a lot of financial help from the government.



The biggest of the old houses here is the Chen (of course!) Historic Residence. This traditional courtyard house was built by a family that had made its fortune dealing in Chinese medicine in Taiwan. (This, it seems, was a common profession among the village's inhabitants.) The house is intact and well-kept, and open to tourists for a small entrance fee. Descendants of the original builders have moved away, but some of



The Chen Historic Residence  
them still come back at times to spend a few days in the old homestead.



The Chen Historic Residence



Boat incense



Steamed stuffed pumpkin buns



Mailing a wooden postcard



Wooden postcards



Baoge singer



Almost all of the other structures in the village are old laogushih residences. Just about all of them are well-maintained, and a number have been renovated and adapted to serve as small commercial establishments. One of them, which makes and sells almond tea, is operated by the village chief himself (a Mr. Chen). One of the shops sells wooden postcards on which are written old folk songs called baoge, once sung to each other by lovers. Buy one of the postcards (which come with stamps attached), and the quaint, charming little old lady who sells them might sing you a baoge.

Other shops sell other local specialties, such as a type of incense—called "boat incense" because the incense stick is mounted in a tiny model of a fishing boat—that kills mosquitoes. And there is a brand-new homestay in the village, where you can spend the

night in a unit built (somewhat) in the shape of a traditional Penghu residence. The homestay operates one unit that is an actual old house, renovated and equipped with modern amenities like air conditioning and a bathroom with flush commode. The perfect place to relax, do nothing, and listen to the sounds of nature at night.

Erkan also maintains the religious practices that have always been a part of Penghu life. The village is home to three temples: a large, ornate plague-god temple, a small and simple Earth God temple, and an elegantly designed, newly built Chen clan shrine where ancestors are revered.

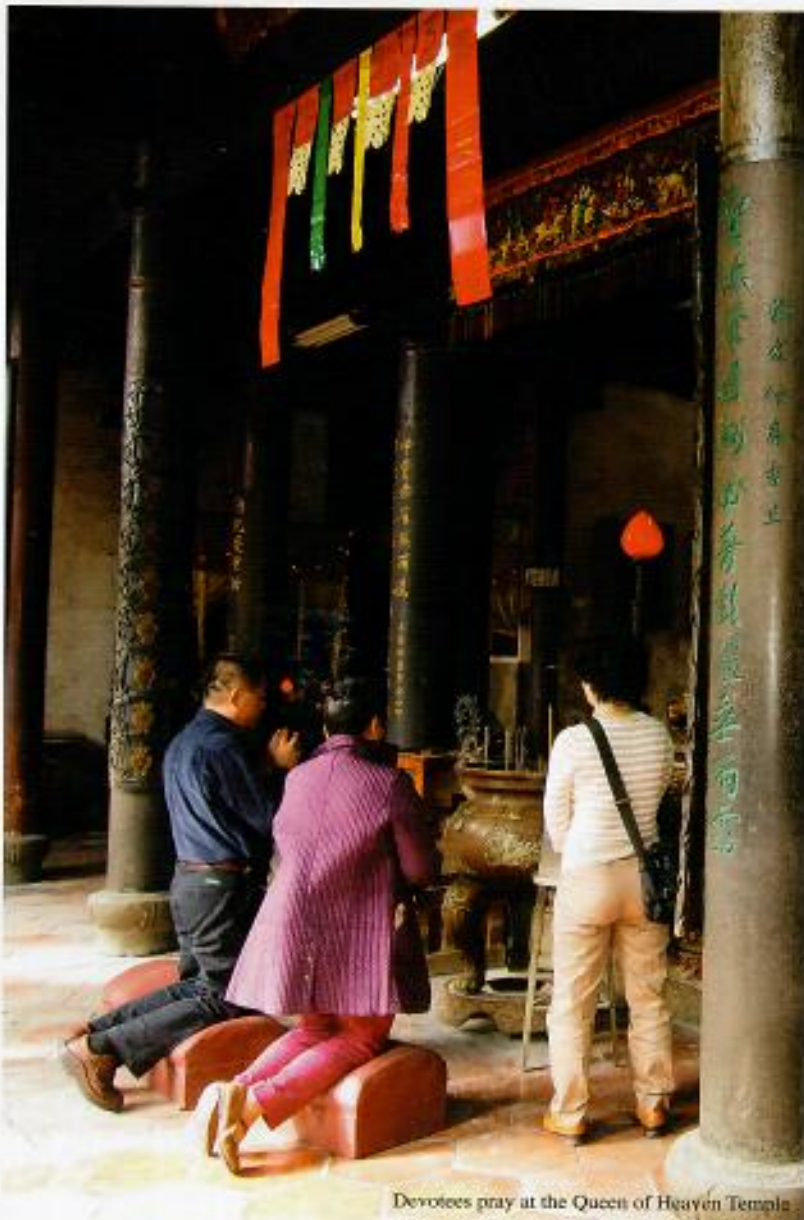


Almond tea

# Temples Reflect a Devout Faith



*Religious faith has always been a big part of Penghu life. The early immigrants braved rough seas and tempestuous currents during the voyage from China, having to pass through what were then known with dread as the "black waters." These were strong currents sweeping across the deep, dark seas on the passage to Penghu from the coast of mainland China; the seas were often dangerously rough, and the current frequently swept ships off course. Voyagers relied heavily on their deities to bring them safely across; and, once securely landed in Penghu, they naturally gave thanks to the gods for their good fortune. And they built temples to express their appreciation and secure the continued blessing of the gods. Penghu, as a result, is one of the most densely "templed" places in the area of Taiwan.*



Devotees pray at the Queen of Heaven Temple

The Chinese worship of plethora of deities, Taoist, Buddhist, and folk (and Confucian, if you like to think of the sage as a deity—which he really is not), and the people of Penghu are right out in the front lines of religious devotion. They call on a vast pantheon of gods, goddesses, and lesser deities to pray for good fortune, prosperity, a rich harvest, an abundant catch of fish, long life, a propitious marriage, the birth of sons, good health, etc. etc. And, like the people in the rest of the Taiwan area, they go to temples to ask the gods for answers to troubling questions.

Among the most popular deities in Penghu temples are Mazu, the Goddess of the Sea, and various plague gods. In fact the oldest temple in Taiwan, the Queen of Heaven Temple in Magong, was built more than four centuries ago to honor Mazu. (The city of Magong was, in fact, named after the Mazu Temple.) This ancient edifice, located in the old part of the city and meticulously restored, is a fine example of traditional southern Fujianese temple architecture, with intricate carvings and exquisite paintings. In the manner of Taiwan's Taoist temples, it is home to a large number of other deities who accompany the host goddess.



Mazu—Queen of Heaven

The second most famous temple in the islands is Guanyin Ting, or Guanyin Pavilion, a smaller temple facing Magong's most popular swimming and wind-surfing area. Originally established in 1696, this temple is devoted to Guanyin, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy. Another Magong temple worth visiting is the Cheng Huang (City God) Temple, built in 1889. The City God takes care of things both temporal and spiritual within his particular territory, and keeps a tally of the good and bad behavior of his constituents. A gigantic abacus is displayed prominently in the temple, to use in summing up the lives of the newly departed and determining which way they will go in the afterlife.



Shueisian Temple



Guanyinting



Biking in front of Guanyin Pavilion



Wind surfing in the Guanyin Pavilion Bay



Keeping evil at bay

A more unique expression of spiritual belief in Perghu is the conical piles of rock, stone tablets, and red-capped wooden sticks that are erected at various places, but especially facing the sea, to quell the winds and keep evil influences at bay. Some of the stone towers can reach dozens of meters in height; these generally have no inscriptions. The wooden sticks and the stone tablets generally do have inscriptions, perhaps the name of a protective deity or strange Daoist symbols.



Worshipping under the 'longliang banyan tree



Grandpa Tower, along with its mate Grandma Tower, protects the residents of Neinan.

# Wars and the Arrival of Foreigners

*Among the troubles and tribulations from which the people of Penghu have frequently sought the protection of the gods are those of war, for these islands have seen their fair share of contending military forces and invading armies. Inevitably, given their location, the islands have a history that is punctuated also by piratical attacks and occupations. The first foreigners (except perhaps Japanese smugglers and pirates) to arrive came with a Dutch naval fleet, which in 1604 met with a typhoon near the coast of Guangzhou and took refuge in Magong. The fleet left the islands after the Ming Dynasty court sent officials to negotiate.*

*The Dutch returned in 1620 following an unsuccessful attack on the Portuguese in Macao. This time they*

*built a fortress atop Shetou (Snake's Head) Hill at Fongguei, a strategic location that commands Magong Bay, with the design of developing a base for trade with China. The Chinese were again less than thrilled with the idea of having a Dutch presence so close to them, and the Ming court sent forces to attack the foreigners. A negotiated settlement to the dispute allowed the Dutch to move farther away and set up a colony headquartered at what is now the city of Tainan, on Taiwan proper.*

*The next fighting to take place in Penghu was between the forces of Jheng Cheng-gong, a half-Japanese pirate-patriot known to the West as*

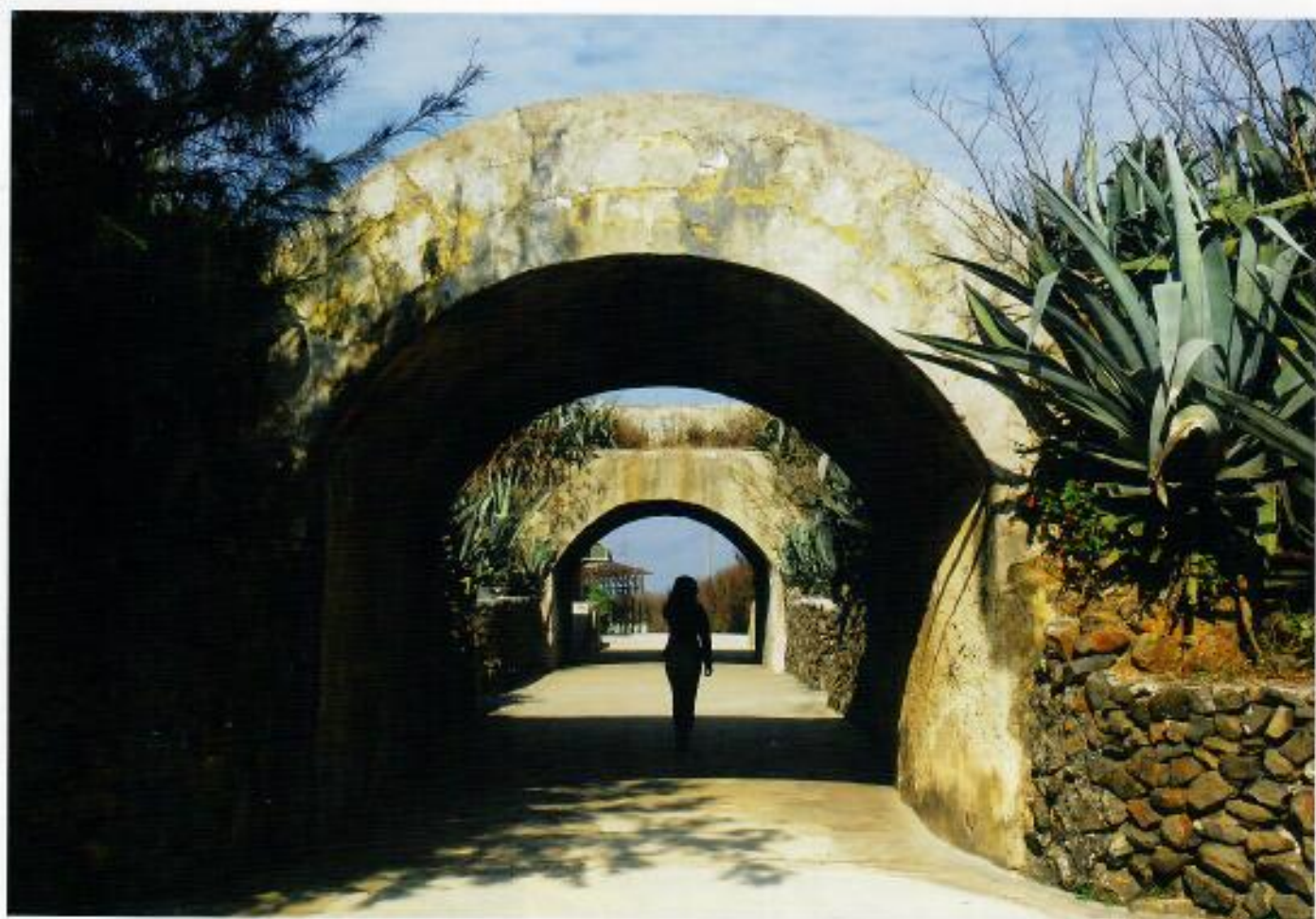
*Koxinga, who resisted the takeover of China by the Manchu Qing Dynasty. Jheng drove the Dutch from Taiwan in 1662, hoping to use the island as a base to counterattack the Qing administration in mainland China. His forces occupied Taiwan and Penghu, but were driven from both places by the Qing admiral Shih Lang in 1684.*

*War between China and France broke out in 1884. The French attacked Penghu and took over the islands in only three days, but a negotiated settlement led to their withdrawal five months later. The general who commanded the French forces on Penghu, Anatole Courbet, died three days after the negotiations; his well-kept grave is still there for those who want to visit.*



Stone gateway at the French Disembarkation Memorial





Siyu Western Fort

Little else remains of the Dutch and French occupation of the islands. The Dutch fort on Shetou Hill has disappeared, and nothing of it is left that can be detected by the untrained eye. The Taiwan Tourism Bureau, however, has built a very pleasant little site here, with wooden

walkways and explanatory plaques that tell the history of the place. In addition to the site of the Dutch fort, there is also a monument to the French soldiers who lost their lives in Penghu and a memorial, in the shape of a warship, that commemorates the loss of a Japanese naval vessel just offshore

when Japan occupied Taiwan and Penghu as a colony.

The war with the French revealed weaknesses in Penghu's defenses, and the Qing government made haste to remedy this by building four forts in the islands and equipping them with cannon purchased from England. The best known of these fortifications today is the Western Fort on Siyu, which is open to the public (for a small entrance fee). Western Fort consists mainly of concrete tunnels; the whole thing is kept clean and well-maintained, and is a pleasant place to spend an hour or so walking through the tunnels, poking into dark rooms, and wondering about the artillery shell niches on the upper wall near the emplacements where cannon once stood. But precious little information is available in English.



The French Disembarkation Memorial



Siyu Eastern Fort

There is a companion fort to the east, known reasonably enough as the Siyu Eastern Fort, which has not been opened to the public. Preparations are now being made to open it up, however; the access road is being widened and the fort itself will no doubt be cleaned up and refurbished. A unique feature of this fort, which like Western Fort is situated on high bluffs overlooking the sea, is a tunnel which connects it with the seashore.

While you are on this part of Siyu, you might as well take a short side trip to Siyu Lighthouse (once called Fisherman's Island Lighthouse), located close beside a small army installation above the sea. This is the oldest lighthouse, or at least the site of the oldest lighthouse, in the islands. The original was an octagonal structure built in 1778, but it was replaced in the 1880s by the rather small, round lighthouse you see today. The Penghu Islands have a total of 24 lighthouses; this gives them the greatest density of lighthouses in the Taiwan area, and attests to their importance to navigation as well as to the dangerous nature of their surrounding waters.



Siyu Lighthouse





Shuncheng Gate

On your way to the lighthouse you will pass through expansive meadows with herds of cattle grazing in them, presenting scenes that could almost be from the American west. Sitting in the meadows, seemingly very much out of place, is a large double-barreled cannon made of concrete. It is a latter-day fake, built to fool observers from the air.

Another defensive legacy of the war with the French was the Magong city wall, completed in 1889. Most of the wall was demolished by the Japanese, in order to expand the city's territory and enlarge its harbor, when they occupied Taiwan and Penghu (1895-1945). Only the Shuncheng Gate remains, with a section of the western wall attached to give some idea of what the structure once looked like. You can find another gate still standing--Dasi (Great West) Gate--but it is an unimpressive replacement built in 1962.



Double-barreled fake cannon built to fool aerial observers



# Japanese Colonial Occupation

*After war broke out between China and Japan in 1894, Japanese forces attacked Penghu the following year and occupied it in just three days (three days seems to be the standard time for conquering these islands) with very few casualties. Later on, though, thousands of them perished from cholera. China lost the war; and, under the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, both Taiwan and Penghu were ceded to Japan. From 1895 to 1945, Penghu was under Japanese colonial rule. New schools were established and the fishing industry mechanized and industrialized to an extent, but little trace of the Japanese occupation remains today with the exception of a few lighthouses and government buildings.*

The source of photographs:  
A Glimpse to Historical Taiwan (1993)  
National Museum of History

The Magong City during the Japanese occupation



The former appearance of Siyu Eastern Fort



The monument of Guanyinting



The scene of the Japanese occupation of Yuwongdau



The most interesting of the old Japanese buildings remaining in Magong today is the Penghu Reclamation Hall, which was built by the Japanese to serve as the residence of their Penghu department chief. The architectural style is Japanese mixed with Western. The building has been refurbished into a cozy museum that (for a small entrance fee) offers a comprehensive introduction to the history of the Penghu Islands, how they were settled by the Han Chinese, and how they were buffeted by frequent conflicts. The displays have pretty good English explanations, and you can

also get yourself an audio guide that will help you to understand and appreciate these islands and their people.

After you finish your tour of the displays, find a seat in the cool, pleasant garden outside to relax as you contemplate and digest some of what you have learned.



English Shipwreck Memorial

# Restoration to Taiwan

*The most recent era in the development of Penghu began with the restoration of the islands to Chinese rule in 1945, after the end of World War II. For decades the government of the Republic of China focused on defense and designated much of the islands' land for the military, fortifying it heavily for use as a bulwark against invasion by Communist China and a launching pad for a hoped-for, but never realized, counterattack against mainland China. In more recent years tensions with China have eased, attack at any moment is no longer expected, and the government's focus has shifted to more pacific economic development aimed at improving living conditions for the islands' people.*

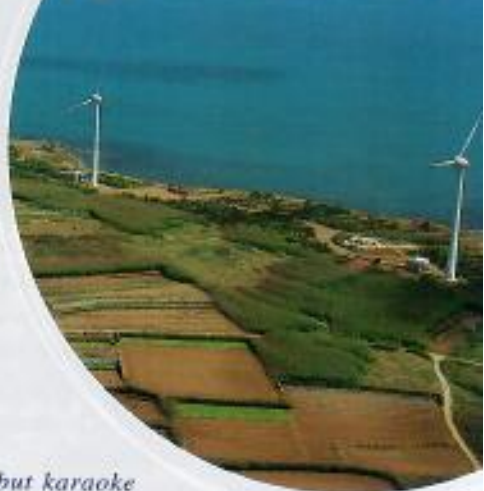
*But there is little industry, the land is naturally dry and unproductive, and the*

*bounties of the sea are no longer so bountiful. Life is still relatively tough (though certainly not desperate) for the local people, and they—especially the young—have moved away in droves in search of a better life. Wherever they may seek their fortunes, however, they retain an intense affection for these islands and return for frequent visits.*

*Those who have remained enjoy all of the amenities that make life easy in the modern world. The roads are excellent and often nearly empty of traffic. Everybody has access to running water and electricity, thanks partly to new desalination plants that augment the insufficient rainfall and new wind-driven power plants that augment the older thermal generating capacity. True, there is only one decrepit movie house located in Magong,*

*but karaoke sing-along parlors abound. The government has shifted much of its developmental effort to tourism as a means of providing a livelihood for the local residents while assuring environmental sustainability.*

Wind power generators at Taungtan



A ship-shaped building encloses a market for seafood products.

**B**y many measures, the economic development of the Penghu Islands is backward. But it is a "backwardness" that has allowed the local people to retain the friendly, hospitable, and unhurried character that people in more intensely developed, more money-focused places have lost. It is a "backwardness" that many of us look back on with nostalgia when we long for a return to the "good old days." This feature alone makes these islands well worth a visit, and it is immediately apparent almost from the moment you step off the plane at Magong Airport. Feelings of pressure and harassment will slip from your shoulders, and you will be bathed in a balmy ambience that encourages pure relaxation.

The only place in these islands with even the slightest bit of international atmosphere is the city of Magong, the capital of Penghu. There is one McDonald's and one Starbucks (there was once a second one, but it could not compete with the ubiquitous, and generally cheaper, local competition), and quite a few 7-Elevens, but that is about it. The city's hotels and homestays, while livable, are generally not even up to three-star international standard. But comfortable accommodation can be found, and being local in character it can give you a rich experience of the indigenous lifestyle.

Night life? Except for the aforementioned karaoke parlors, nil. There are a couple of decent pubs, one of which has survived for more than a decade, where you can have a pleasant drink and maybe meet some friendly locals. There is at least one decent (and reasonably priced) steak house, and a number of Japanese eateries. Other than that, restaurant options—even Chinese restaurant options—are limited unless you love seafood; but if you are a seafood gourmet, you will be in hog heaven. In Magong and other parts of the islands you can find the freshest produce of the sea—fish of all kinds (including grouper and a locally farmed specialty, cobia), squid, octopus, cuttlefish, sea urchin, sea cucumber, clams, oysters, sting ray, seaweed. Find one of the restaurants in Magong that display



Enjoying coffee near the harbor

their food swimming around in storefront tanks, choose the exact fish, crab, lobster, or whatever it is you want, and have the restaurant cook it up for you.

Or look around for other local specialties in the unique little (or not so little) restaurants of the city. See if you can find coral cakes (which the cook insists are vegetarian), greens with spicy meat, deep-fried cuttlefish rolls, purple rice, or egg with sour melon. Or try raw sea urchin served on a block of ice. Many of the local goodies are packaged up for sale: dried seafood and seaweed of all kinds, peanut candy, brown-sugar cakes, salty crackers—perfect gifts for family and friends back home.



Purple rice

Syujia Village, showing aquaculture ponds





## Cheap and Simple Pleasures

Magong at night



Sculpting a stone artwork

Most of the pleasures of Penghu are simple pleasures that cost nothing to enjoy but a little time. You can easily spend a day strolling around Magong, which is small enough that most of its tourist spots are within easy walking distance. Follow your steps around this city and you will make an interesting discovery around almost every corner. Not the least of these is the little green parks that are dotted about the cityscape, many of them with charming little sculptures. Most of the bomb shelters and pillboxes that bristled along the streets in the old days, built against the expected invasion from China, are gone now, but a bomb shelter and a pillbox have been left as historic artifacts and are duly noted on the city's tourist maps.

The old section of the city, adjacent to the Queen of Heaven Temple, has been renovated and transformed into a shopping area mostly for tourists, with curio shops selling all sorts of local crafts. These include items made of the islands' own veined-stone agate (buy now, as mining has been halted and supplies are diminishing) and carvings made of red coral (which is also becoming scarce). These two materials are not inexpensive these days, but an abundance of items made of cheaper stone and wood is also available.



Stone carving

One of Penghu's best-known tourist sights, the Four-hole Well, is also located in this area. This well began providing water for trading ships 300 years ago; and even after the arrival of tap water, it continued to be used by local residents for washing purposes. Nearby is another famous well, called Ten Thousand Soldiers Well, which according to legend was granted by the goddess Mazu (Goddess of the Sea and host deity of the nearby Queen of Heaven Temple) in 1683 to nourish the troops of Qing Dynasty

admiral Shih Lang during his expedition to extinguish the last adherents to the vanquished Ming Dynasty in Taiwan and Penghu. Just a few steps away is a small temple, built in 1843, devoted to the deified spirit of the admiral.



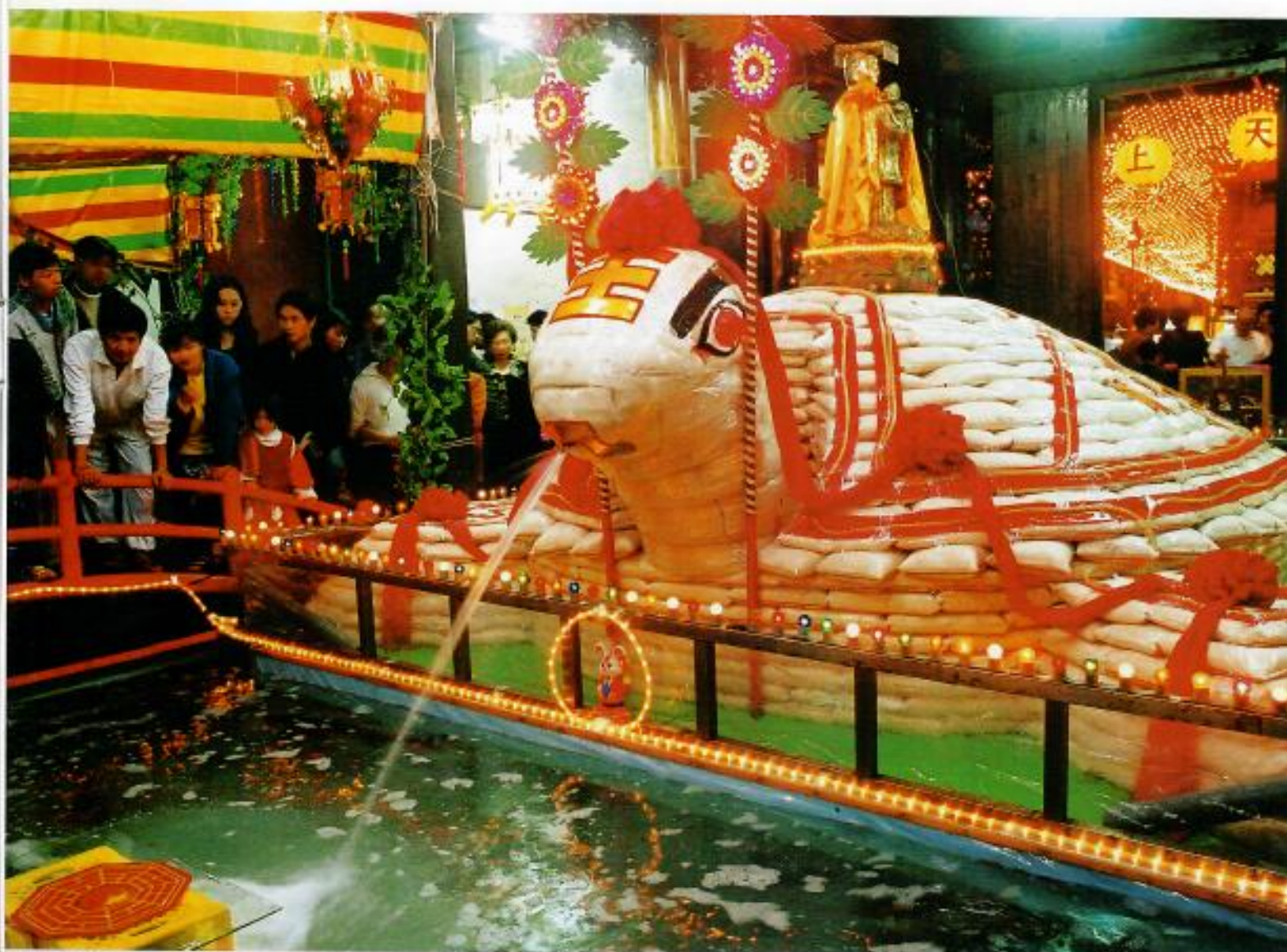
The Four-hole Well



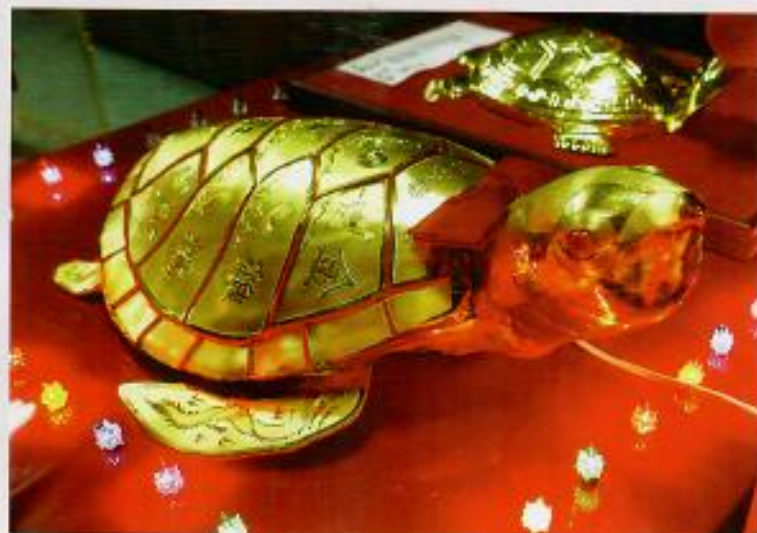
Zhongyang Street has been transformed into a tourist market







A huge Rice Turtle offering on the Lantern Festival



Golden Turtles offered on the Lantern Festival

Another major temple in the neighborhood is Shueisian Temple, founded in 1696. It is devoted to a number of deities, including Dayu (Yu the Great, founder of the legendary Xia Dynasty), Cyu Yuan (the tragic poet-patriot of the third century B.C.), and Li Bai (the famous poet of the Tang Dynasty). This was, and to some extent still is, where those going to sea came to ask the gods for a safe voyage. In 1875 it was rebuilt by a local business association, which thereafter used it as a meeting hall.

# Unique Attractions of the Smaller Islands

If you have time during your winter Penghu trip, you should try to get away from the main islands and spend some time on the smaller islets spread throughout the archipelago. Getting to them requires a boat or airplane ride; but each of them has its own unique character and attractions, and each is well worth visiting. And if what you are looking for is peace and quiet, this is where you will find it in even greater abundance than on the main islands.



A ferry transports tourists among the islands.



The island of Cimei

The southernmost of these islands is Cimei, which is big enough to boast its own airport—but not so big that you cannot walk completely around it in a leisurely day stroll. The name of the island means "Seven Beauties," and therein lies a sad tale of death before dishonor. According to legend, some time in the early years of the Ming Dynasty seven maidens who were washing laundry by the well when Japanese pirates attacked leaped into it and died to protect their chastity. The villagers made it a tomb in their honor, and it is said that seven unusually fragrant trees subsequently grew up around it. The well-tomb is still there, but it has been "improved" so much by the local authorities that it has lost its endearingly rustic character.



Little Taiwan on Cimei



Cimei's Twin Hearts Stone Weir

On your walk around Cimei you will discover a number of spectacular stone formations. These include Husband-waiting Rock, which resembles a woman reclining on her side (she is said to have turned to stone in that shape while waiting vainly on the shore for her fisherman husband to return from the sea). You will see Micro Taiwan, a sea-eroded platform in the shape of the island of Taiwan, and the Stone Lion, a basalt outcropping in said shape. And, just off the northern shore of Cimei, you will see the famous Double-heart Stone Fish Trap, one of the most photographed sites in the islands. Nanhu Harbor is the biggest settlement on Cimei and the liveliest place in the archipelago outside of the main islands. Here, "liveliest" is definitely a relative term.

The island of Wangan, located about half-way between Magong and Cimei, is also one of the biggest of the smaller islands. Wangan is best known as the site of Jhongshe Village, with its cluster of relatively well-preserved laogushih houses that attract just about all of the tourists who visit. A more mod-



Tomb of the Seven Beauties



Veined stone

ern attraction here is the Green Sea Turtle Tourism and Conservation Center, built as part of the effort to protect this endangered species. Green sea turtles return to Wangan each year during breeding season (but generally in pitifully small numbers) to nest on the island's best beach, which is put off limits to casual visitors when the turtles might be laying eggs in the sand.

Overlooking the beach is an expansive grassland where you can see herds of grazing cattle. This is also where the best-known Penghu mineral, veined-stone agate, is (or was) produced. You might not be able to pick up veined stone, with its beautiful colors and patterns (another gift of the volcanoes), on this island any more; but you can find plenty of it in the curio shops of Magong, carved into chops, mounted on necklaces, or made into small figurines.

Just to the west of Wangan is tiny Maoyu. The name means "Cat Island"; in fact there are two islands, one larger and one smaller, that are said to resemble cats looking at each other. Despite the name there are no cats here, but there are lots of birds, especially when migratory species fly south around the time when autumn transitions to winter. The larger Maoyu rises to the greatest height of all the Penghu islands, all of 79 meters. The rugged terrain makes it difficult for human beings to get on and around the island, which no doubt accounts for much of its popularity with birds. Now, it is a protected area and tourists are not allowed on the land.

Just off the eastern coast of Wangan lies Jiangjyunao, or General's Harbor, named for an officer subordinate to Jheng Cheng-gong (Koxinga) who was stationed there in the latter half of the 17th century. This island, like Wangan, once had deposits of veined-stone agate (and growths of coral in the surrounding waters) which have long since been exhausted. These valuable resources helped account for the island's relative prosperity, with imposing buildings, opulent temples, and bustling activity that prompted some locals to give it the nickname, "Little Hong Kong." Now the island's economy has declined, and its population has plummeted from 1,000 to just 300.

Tongpan, located in the sea to the southwest of Fongguei on the main island of Magong, has the most spectacular display of columnar basalt in all of Penghu. The entire island is surrounded by a wall of



The Zheng's Family Historic House in Wangan's Jhongshe Village

columns supporting a flat plateau on top. A paved pathway running around the island lets you observe these spectacular formations up close. The island has a harbor and a settlement, with an ornately decorated plague god temple that is perhaps the most popular place of worship on smaller islands. Large expanses of coral in the sea nearby are a favorite with snorkelers.

Jibel, the largest island in the northern portion of the archipelago, is best known as a water-sports area. The western side of the island features a long golden-sand beach which extends onto a distinctive narrow tongue-shaped spit of sand reaching thousands of meters into the sea off the island's southern tip. Dozens of stone fish traps are scattered off the north coast.

A short distance across the sea is the northernmost bit of land in the Penghu Archipelago, Mudou Island. Known for its treacherous waters with dangerous reefs lurking just below the surface, which have brought an unhappy end to many a ship, Mudou is topped by a distinctive black-and-white-striped lighthouse, built in 1902 to help ships pass by more safely, that is the tallest steel-frame lighthouse in East Asia. A tablet on the island commemorates those lost in a nearby British shipwreck in 1983. The surrounding waters teem with fish, which (together with a nice little white-sand beach on its southern shore) makes Mudou a good place for snorkeling.



A quaint old window



Traditional door handles



Rooftop in traditional Southeastern China style



Snorkeling at Madouyu



Jibei's famous beach



Gupo Island

Another good island for snorkeling is Gupo, off Jibei's southwestern tip, with two sandy bays and expansive beds of coral to the southeast. The underwater scene is especially spectacular when huge numbers of banded blue sprat pass by during their annual migration. When laver is in season, inhabitants come from nearby Chihkan Village on Baisha (Gupo has no residents of its own) to harvest this seaweed, which is considered a delicacy. Gupo also has an interesting geological structure, characterized by the contrast between the porous basalt that makes up most of the island and the layer of iron-rich quartz sandstone which covers it.



Harvesting laver

# Soak up the Past in Penghu

**S**o find yourself a nice friendly homestay and settle down for a week or so. Let the ambience of the islands slowly soak into your being until you yourself become part of the local landscape. See the local sights, go swimming or windsurfing or snorkeling when the weather permits, savor the local seafood, travel to some of the small islands and enjoy their unique attractions.

But most of all, get to know the people of these hospitable islands, and their lifestyle. Find out how they fish and farm, how they spend their leisure hours, how they have fun, how they deal with life in what many consider a backwater—especially during the season when the winds blow strong and outsiders stay away. You will discover that while they lack access to much of the hustle and bustle of modern life that most urban denizens find essential, they are far more comfortable and content, and probably much happier. Take advantage of the opportunity to find more happiness and contentment yourself amongst the people of these lucky little islands in the Taiwan Straits.



Biking



Sightseeing



Playing on  
the beach



Goodbye from Penghu!



# Tourist Information

## Government Office Travel Information Line

Office	Phone
Penghu County Government	(06)926-8545
National Scenic Area Administration, Tourism Bureau	(06)921-6521
Beihai Tourist Information Center	(06)993-3082
Nanhai Tourist Information Center	(06)926-4738
Penghu Tourist Information Center	(06)921-6445
Penghu County Cultural Affairs Bureau	(06)926-1141
Magong City Government	(06)927-2710
Husi Township Office	(06)992-1731
Baisha Township Office	(06)993-1001
Siyu Township Office	(06)998-2611
Wangan Township Office	(06)999-1311
Cimei Township Office	(06)997-1007
Penghu Tour Interpreter Association	(06)921-9101
Magong Airport Tourist Information Desk	(06)922-9127
Penghu County Government Tourism website	<a href="http://tour.penghu.gov.tw">http://tour.penghu.gov.tw</a>

## Airline Reservations

UNIAIR		TransAsia Airways	
Taipei	(02)2518-5166	Reservations (land line)	449-8123
Taichung	(04)2615-5199	Reservations (cell)	(02)449-8123
Tainan	(06)260-2811		
Chiayi	(05)286-2363		
Kaohsiung	(07)791-1000		
Magong	(06)922-8999		
Mandarin Airlines		Far Eastern Air	
Taipei	(02)2717-1230	Reservations (land line)	4066-6789
Taichung	(04)2615-5088	Reservations (cell)	(02)4066-6789
Kaohsiung	(07)802-8868		
Magong	(06)922-8688		

## Sea Transportation

<b>All Star - Between Budai, Chiayi and Magong Harbor</b>	
Chiayi (05)349-0948	Magong (06)926-0668
<b>First Today - Between Budai, Chiayi and Magong Harbor</b>	
Chiayi (06)347-6210	Magong (06)926-0668
<b>Huatai Cruise - Between No. 7 Dock, Kaohsiung to Magong Harbor</b>	
Kaohsiung (07)561-5313	Magong (06)926-4087
<b>Today Star - Between Anping Harbor, Tainan and Magong Harbor</b>	
Anping (06)261-8333	Magong (06)927-5596

## Transportation in Penghu

Penghu County Bus and Ferry Service Administration	(06)927-2376
Penghu County Ferry and Cruise Association	(06)927-8325

## Travel Agency Association

Penghu County Association of Travel Agents	(06)921-7457
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## Accommodation

Penghu County Association of Hotels	(06)921-6718
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To find a homestay online, log into <http://tour.penghu.gov.tw/>.







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A cultural paradise right next door



Penghu County Government