

Taiwan Scene
Formosa Tourism Journal

Taiwan Scene | Taiwan Digital Travel Magazine

Taiwan Scene is your digital magazine for exploring Taiwan travel. Travel guides, sightseeing must-sees, unique events & activities and more!

MENU



By: Taiwan Scene 2017-12-11

Three Days on Xiao Liuqiu (were not enough)

搜尋

SUBSCRIBE TO
BLOG VIA EMAIL

Enter your email
address to
subscribe to this
blog and receive
notifications of
new posts by
email.



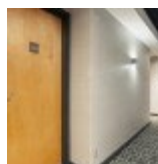
Subscrib



Astute readers of my regular weekend column may have noted that there was no column last weekend, and this was because I was off for three days enjoying myself on Xiao Liuqiu island. MyTaiwanTour published a previous article on this barely discovered gem [here](#) a few months back, but this was the first time I'd gotten to experience the place firsthand.

Readers, brace yourselves, because you're going to be hearing more about Xiao Liuqiu in the months to come. Because if Taiwan is *Asia's best kept travel secret*, then Xiao Liuqiu is definitely *Taiwan's best kept travel secret*. And if nearly two decades in travel writing has taught me anything

MOST POPULAR



Quarantine Hotels in Taiwan: 6 Travelers Share their Experiences



Everything You Need to Know About Getting A Scooter License in Taiwan



How To Get A Car License in Taiwan: Your Guide

RECENT POSTS

9 Alternative Hiking Trails with Views of Taipei 101

2021-12-11

Splashing Ink and Watercolor Throughout Taipei

2021-12-08

Ginger Duck: Taiwan's Winter Comfort Food That's Impossible Not to Love

2021-12-02

Exploring Kiwit, One of Hualien's Most Secluded Indigenous Villages

2021-11-27

Pasiwali, Taitung's Awesome Indigenous Music

it's this: "best kept travel secrets" don't stay secrets long.

So before the cat gets too far out of the bag, let me create some hype of my own by telling you why I've fallen in love with this island off the coast of Pingtung County, why I'm planning to spend a lot more time there in 2018, and you should too.

Xiao Liuqiu is wicked easy to get to

Compared to any of the other outer islands (including my one-time stomping ground, Penghu), Xiao Liuqiu is a breeze to reach. 45 minutes by car from the Zuoying HSR station to Donggang Harbor (which, by the way, boasts one of Taiwan's greatest seafood markets, where a sashimi feast can be had for a fraction of what you'd pay nearly anywhere else), and the ferry out to the island takes about as long as a trip on the Staten

to Getting Behind the Wheel

Festival, is Back in December

2021-11-20



9 Taiwanese Movies and Dramas to Watch on Netflix When it's Cold Outside

CATEGORIES

Places

Activities

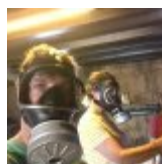
Travel tips

Hotels &

Accommodations

Voices From

Taiwan



Goats and Gas Masks at Taiwan's Hell Kitchen

FACEBOOK



The Taipei Grand Trail: Discovering the Secret Wildness of the Capital

 Facebook

k



What does "Xue Hua Piao Piao" Really

Island ferry. Bonus points for the boat being calm enough to make a pre-journey trip to the seafood market *not a regrettable decision.*

Mean?



Proof that great travel experiences come in small packages

The island is small enough to be manageable on an electric scooter, which is a good thing as Taiwan's wild west days in which rental shops rented 150cc motorcycles to anyone with money and a smile are long gone. These days you'll need an international driver's license with the proper motorcycle endorsement to get

one of those, but electric scooters are still classified as low powered enough to require only the aforementioned cash and a smile. Electric scooters are pretty low powered (maximum speed of about 30KPH, which fits in with Xiao Liuqiu's *take it easy* vibe), and you can get around the island about three times before swapping out the battery for a new one.



We got ours from the Lu Nung (Green Power) agency, who were nice enough to pick us up right off the boat and give Stephanie a private lesson on scooter riding and betel nut. Stephanie said the lesson was helpful and the betel nut

interesting.



Though it's been compared to Okinawa, three days exploring the island left me thinking that Xiao Liuqiu is more a bite-sized microcosm of Taiwan itself, offering a variety of Taiwanese cultural experiences and natural splendors in an easy to navigate environment. We spent most of the first day riding around the island on our electric scooters, stopping for a late lunch of fried rice and seafood soup in the main town just by Baisha Harbor before exploring the town itself, a few long streets with a mixture of restaurants and still-closed bars, snack shops and retail stores. Exploring the lanes and alleys around the main street led us to a treasure trove of

older traditional homes with stone walls being consumed by Banyan trees and a few small temples (a mere harbinger of things to come). We walked along the colorful waterfront and stopped into the lovely [Coral Cafe](#) for an afternoon cappuccino surrounded by gorgeous art while listening to cool jazz on genuine vinyl albums that any Portland hipster would approve of before heading back to the [SunnyBay BnB](#) to watch the sunset from our porch.

So yeah, great coffee, cool vibes & a relaxed atmosphere. What more could one ask from a tropical island?

Swimming with Sea Turtles

Yes, that seems like a worthwhile *other thing to to ask for*, and we spent a good chunk of our second day on the island doing just that in a secluded bay on the Xiao Liuqiu eastern coast. I'd heard about the diving in Xiao Liuqiu for

years, but only recently had I learned that the island was a protected turtle sanctuary, and as such the coral reefs surrounding Xiao Liuqiu are quite literally swimming with enormous sea turtles.

Our guide (蟹老闆專業浮潛, “Crab boss professional snorkeling,” – they’re just down the road from the scooter shop) suited us up and brought us over to one of the island’s many promising snorkeling spots.

As we snorkeled in the reefs closer to shore, a dozen or so scuba divers were further out and under swimming in the deep. Stephanie spotted the first turtle. We’d been swimming above the reefs looking down at schools of tropical fish swimming below for about twenty minutes when she waved me over excitedly. I swam to where she was floating and saw it; its shell was about the size of a truck’s hubcap, and it hovered

placidly, prehistoric maw snapping out every few seconds to make short of a fish, happy as a fat kid at an all you can eat sashimi buffet. We hovered above it for long minutes, our guide taking pictures of us and the turtle. Realizing its meal was being watched and recorded, the turtle swam out towards the deeper waters in search of a less public dining spot.

Though the waters were still warm enough for skin and swimsuits, we were glad we'd taken advantage of our guide's offer of wetsuits after the first fifteen minutes, both because they kept our body temperature warm enough to keep swimming for about 90 minutes and they provided a nearly magical buoyancy that counteracted my lifelong fear of drowning. When we eventually became too exhausted for further swimming, we were especially glad for the protection provided by the thick wet suits on the

short, wet scooter ride from the beach to Crab Boss Snorkeling Shop. (Special thanks to Crab Boss Snorkeling Shop for taking the photos below!)

Read also: [10 reasons to visit Xiao Liuqiu, Taiwan's Hidden Island Gem](#)



Balancing tourism with environmental concerns

Xiao Liuqiu is a marine sanctuary, meaning that while tour guides bring people out to swim above (*but not too closely to*) the sea turtles and give demonstrations about the proper way to handle sea urchins (carefully; they're all spiky and some are filled with poison), the turtles remain protected and any sea urchin

you eat on the island has come from non-island urchin beds. But Xiao Liuqiu's commitment to eco-tourism goes beyond this, and beyond the electric scooters that are quickly becoming the favored form of transportation on the island. On our second evening there we headed over to a party celebrating a weekend long cleanup event that had brought locals and volunteers together to collect trash from around the island (and, sadly, trash that had floated up onto the shore). The event had been going on all weekend, and culminated in a party with live bands, food & general festivities at Sanlong Temple, one of the island's larger temples. The mood was festive, and most of the participants were exhausted from their work. One of the volunteers told me that the event was just a small part of the island's overall plan to develop a cleaner, greener island.



More culture than you can shake a stick at

On the ride home from the party in Sanlong Temple we decided to sleep in the next day and do some temple hopping the following morning. Our plans for a late morning were soon challenged, however, thanks to my desire to spend an extra twenty minutes riding down a road we'd somehow missed during previous rides. Somewhere on the island's quiet southern tip we passed through a small village that by all rights should have been asleep but wasn't. Instead, folks were out assembling a colorful stage in front of a temple. Inquiring what was going on, Stephanie and I found ourselves invited to a traditional opera performance scheduled for 8am the next

morning. It was an invitation that Stephanie, a student of Taiwanese art and culture, couldn't refuse.

The next morning after a strong mug of coffee each, we rode back to the village, which was way less quiet than it had been the night before, indeed far noisier than any small village should have been. The sound of morning birdsong was quickly replaced by that most distinctly Taiwanese sound, a *Lu bian Guzixi*, or *roadside Taiwanese opera*. The small stage from the night before was filled with several performers and musicians performing a play, and as we watched it seemed to me that they performed not for the benefit of the small early morning crowd assembled, but for the god inside of the temple facing the stage. A brief conversation (mostly shouted above the noise of instruments and sharp, high notes of the dialogue itself) revealed this to be true. The party was for the

benefit of Matsu, who must have been by the end of the event as hard of hearing as Stephanie and I were halfway through.



Three Days was not enough

With only a half day left on our Xiao Liuqiu vacation, we spent the rest of the morning relaxing in our hotel until checkout time and the remaining time visiting some of the *must visit* sights of the island. We visited the Black Devil Cave and its attached art museum before scooting over to the Beauty Cave and its nearby pavilion. Riding back to the bike shop to deliver our bikes (and be delivered

ourselves to the ferry that would take us back to *the Mainland*, we left unexplored a dozen or so beautiful and ostentatious temples, several beaches on which people were swimming, snorkeling & kayaking, simultaneously regretting that we'd not had time to visit these places and glad that we hadn't, knowing that it gave us many reasons to return to Xiao Liuqiu sooner rather than later. And if that's not the hallmark of a truly excellent vacation spot, I don't know what is.

Expect to see more about Xiao Liuqiu on these pages in the near future. And if you can't wait to read about it, leave a message below and the good folks at [MyTaiwanTour](#) will customize your experience from start to finish.

Until next week, I leave you with a collage of images from the journey.

JSB

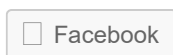
More on outlying island:

The Penghu Pearls – Islands
Close to Taiwan’s Heart, Yet a
World Away

Green Island — A Tropical
Island of Myriad Scenic,
Historic, and Outdoor Fun
Attractions

Journey to Another World –
Orchid Island

分享此文:



Like this:

Loading...

Tags: Creature , Culture , December ,
Xiaoliuqiu



Ten Festivals
Worth Planning
your Taiwan
Holiday around
(Part one)



Ten Festivals
Worth Planning
your Taiwan
Holiday around
(Part two)

Leave a Reply

FOLLOW US

Powered by WordPress.com.