



Flying Fish Festival on Orchid Island

Tourists should be sure to set aside some time for a firsthand experience of this festival.

The flying fish season is afoot on Orchid Island - the offshore island off the coast of Taitung County. The lives of the Tao (Yami) Tribe are closely intertwined with the Flying Fish Festival. Their traditional lifestyle has been highly preserved resulting in a travel experience that is substantially distinct from elsewhere in Taiwan. The Flying Fish Festival is the best time to visit Orchid Island.

There are several myths about the origin of the Flying Fish Festival. The overall gist is that at some point in the past, a group of people looking for food along the beach inadvertently discovered a fish with wings. They cooked it together with other fish, shrimp, and shellfish. As a result, they got a strange sickness. That evening in a dream, an elder was visited by the King of the Flying Fish where he was told he couldn't mix the fish with others and presented with other taboos to abide by. Since then, the Tao Tribe and flying fish have had an interconnected relationship that still remains to the present day.

The festival runs for several months correlated to the influx of migratory fish along the Kuroshio Current. Depending on yearly conditions, the festival begins in April or May. The festival is divided into several phases that each have cultural significance. Abiding by traditional customs, some events are blessing the boats, praying for a bountiful catch, summoning the fish, first-fishing night ceremony, and fishing cessation.

Even in modern days, the men of the tribe wear loin-cloths, silver helmets, and other ceremonial attire. As a community, they face the sea to pray for a bountiful catch. Tourists should be sure to set aside some time for a firsthand experience of this festival. It will surely provide unparalleled insight into one of the best preserved indigenous cultures found anywhere in Taiwan.

Special Considerations

Due to the many taboos, tourists should keep the following in mind.

*Tourists should not randomly touch the chinurikuran and tatara (two types of fishing canoes)

*No trespassing where local residents hang and dry their flying fish.

*No snorkeling/diving in some areas around the island that overlap on fishing grounds.



Orchid Island – A Hidden Gem in Taitung

Orchid Island is one of the most unique travel experiences one can have in Taiwan. Its name is derived from a variety of orchid that is endemic to the island and is the second largest offshore island in Taiwan. Those who have toured Orchid Island rave about its distinct characteristics, majestic oceanscape, and beautiful landscapes. Being slightly less convenient to get to than Green Island results in a lower tourist population which makes it a superb destination for the adventurous. The Tao (Yami) Tribe has invested significant effort to preserve their traditional lifestyle making the island incredibly rich with indigenous culture.

What To Do

Coastal Loop

With a single main road around the island, a great itinerary can be planned by touring the perimeter of the island. It is the most convenient way to see many of the hotspots on the island which feature unique rock formations and amazing scenic outposts.

Hiking/River Tracing

Hiking and river tracing are great options for nature lovers. Take a hike up to Heaven Lake to catch a glimpse of the wonderful ecology and wildlife. With many river tracing options around the island, it's a great way to cool off on hot days and enjoy an adventure that is off the beaten path.

Snorkeling/Diving

With an exceptional 30m to 40m+ year-round visibility, scuba diving and snorkeling on Orchid Island is definitely one of the best locations in Taiwan. Many rank it even higher than Green Island or Penghu.



Upcoming Events

May.

- Mitten Crab Festival
- King Kong Marathon
- Taitung Marathon

Jun.

- Taitung Fluvial Festival
- 2019 Taiwan International Balloon Festival

Jul.

- 2019 Taiwan International Balloon Festival
- Indigenous Harvest Festival
- Makapahay Culture Festival
- Jialulan Handicraft Market
- 2019 Taiwan East Coast Land Arts Festival



Japanese Director Uncovers a connection between Japan and Taitung

Japanese director Atsuko Sakai has spent years making documentaries about Taitung. She has focused on highlighting residents whose lives were impacted by the Japanese Colonization of Taiwan (1895-1945). Her exposé shed a whole new light on personal experiences from an intertwined history with Japan. A public showing of her latest film was well received by an audience in 2018. This showing was supported by Taitung County Government which continues to promote the arts and cultural exchange.

The release of Taiwan Jinsei in 2009 marked the start of a three-film series followed by Taiwan Identity in 2013, and Taiwan Banzai in 2017. The films look at significant events in Taiwan history and the deep connection between Japan and Taiwan. The first two films focused on elderly people over 80 in Taiwan who spent their youth under Japanese rule, and that experienced a period of both pre- and post-war. She conveyed their mixed feelings toward Japan. Her latest film, Taiwan Banzai, follows two protagonists from different indigenous tribes – Bunun and Amis. These parallel plot lines demonstrate the difference in the cultural livelihoods of these tribes and the traditions upheld even in the present day. In Chenggong Township, she captures Japanese fishing songs that are still preserved while following the life of a retired fishing boat captain who specialized in catching swordfish. From a different approach, she takes a trip into the mountains to explore the hunting culture of the Bunun people. In Taiwan Banzai, Ms. Sakai emphasizes a return to nature and tradition since she feels that this is something the modern society of Japan is losing.

The next project she is working on features Orchid Island. She insists that there is a correlation to the relationship between Orchid Island and Taiwan and that of Okinawa and Japan. From this angle, a new perspective of the Tao tribe will undoubtedly be ascertained. With the fantastic success of her previous works, this film will surely unveil a plethora of insight which has not been documented previously. And once again, her film will showcase the beautiful, breathtaking, and unspoiled landscape of Taitung. For those interested in an in-depth look at Taitung through personal experience and historical context, her films are not to be missed.

Hard and soft coral, sea snakes, turtles, and barracuda can all be commonly observed which makes spending time in the water a must-do. There's even an accessible wreck dive for the scuba fanatics.

Getting Around

A bike tour is a great way to peruse the sites around the island leisurely. However, since the island is quite large, the best option for making your way around is on scooter. Be sure to drive slow for safety and watch out for mountain goats which roam the island freely.

Getting There

Airplane

Taitung Airport (TTT) ↔ Orchid Island (Lanyu) Airport (KYD)

Time: 25 minutes / 19-seat small airplane

Ferry

Taitung Fugang Fish Harbor ↔ Orchid Island Kaiyun Harbor

Swimming

Not recommended! Haha!