



Southern Taiwan

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Best Temples

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- ➔ Matsu Temple (p243)
- ➔ Nankunshen Temple (p261)
- ➔ Foguangshan (p263)
- ➔ Temple clusters in Lotus Pond (p256)

Best Bike Rides

- ➔ Kenting National Park (p273)
- ➔ County Road 185 (p275)
- ➔ Dongshan Coffee Road (p253)
- ➔ Houbi (p252)
- ➔ Anping in Tainan (p247)
- ➔ Kaohsiung (p259)

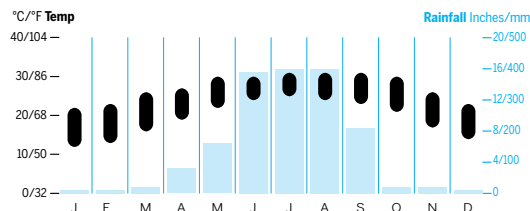
Why Go?

Southern Taiwan is a land of timeless rituals and strong folk culture. The yearly calendar is chock-full of some of Taiwan's most unforgettable festivals: when they're not burning boats to honour their indomitable ancestors, southerners let off fierce fireworks to seek supernatural protection for the future.

Tainan, the island's former capital, is the city most worth visiting outside Taipei. Expect a feast of original street snacks, flamboyant temples and enduring relics available at every turn. Outside the cities, the wonderful biking routes and beaches offer enough activities to impress action travellers, and the wild landscape simply stirs the blood. From the jagged mountains and beautiful coastal cliffs of Pingtung County to the geological oddity of mud volcanoes outside Kaohsiung, this is Formosa at its most formidable. No wonder millions of purple and yellow butterflies return yearly to overwinter in the verdant mountain valleys around Maolin and Meinong. They've chosen well.

When to Go

Tainan



Feb Yenshui fire-works festival.

Apr The Spring Scream music festival takes over Kenting.

Sep–Oct Raptor migration over Kenting National Park.

National Parks & Forest Recreation Areas

There are three national parks in the south: Kenting, a beach playground with some well-protected areas into which few people venture; Taijiang, Taiwan's newest national park and a storehouse for ecological and

cultural heritage along the southwest coast; and Yushan, unfortunately now inaccessible from the south because of typhoon damage. Maolin Forest Recreation Area is a stronghold for aboriginal culture and also holds an important overwintering valley for the purple butterfly, while Shuangliou Forest Recreation Area has a gorgeous waterfall.



Southern Taiwan Highlights

- 1** Marvel at Taiwan's temple heritage in and around the old capital of **Tainan** (p242).
- 2** Swim, surf and cycle year-round in **Kenting National Park** (p273).
- 3** Discover the bizarre yet interesting Martian landscape of **Wushanding Mud Volcanoes** (p266).

- 4** Bird- and butterfly-watch at protected areas including **Taijiang National Park** (p252) and **Meinong** (p263).
- 5** Enjoy a bike ride along charming back-country routes such as **County Road 185** (p275).
- 6** Climb **Beidawushan**, the most southerly of the 3000m-plus peaks in

Taiwan, and admire the view from the clouds (p272).

- 7** Get rained on by fireworks at **Yenshui** (p258).
- 8** Snorkel or soak up some sun at Taiwan's only coral island, **Little Liuchiu Island** (p269).
- 9** Watch a ceremonial boat burn to the ground in **Donggang** (p267).