



Song-luo Lake is situated some 1,300 meters above sea level amid high mountains in Yilan County. (Zheng Kai-ren, courtesy of the Tourism Bureau)

1 Geography

At a Glance

- Abundant variety of geological features
- Geological database to be established
- Highest peak in Northeast Asia (Jade Mountain)

Popularly known as “Taiwan,” the Republic of China is located in the Western Pacific between Japan and the Philippines. Territories now under the ROC government’s jurisdiction cover a total area of approximately 36,000 square kilometers, including the main island of Taiwan, the archipelagoes of Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu, and other islands.

Taiwan is blessed with a wide range of climatic zones from the tropical to the temperate, nurturing an abundant variety of flora and fauna, many of which are endemic to Taiwan. Among the multitude of mountains that occupies more than half of Taiwan proper, over 200 peaks tower higher than 3,000 meters above sea level. The smaller islands have their own distinctive natural features, such as the basalt columns on the Penghu Islands and the marine hot springs on Green Island, while the Kinmen Islands and Taiping Island of the Nansha (Spratly) Islands are located at strategic positions.

Taiwan Proper

Off the eastern coast of Asia lie the mountainous island arcs of the Western Pacific. Taiwan proper is located at the center of what lies closest to the continent and marks the edge of the Asiatic continental shelf. The largest body of land between Japan and the Philippines, it measures nearly 400 kilometers from north to south and around 145 kilometers from east to west at its widest (see table, “Area and Geographical Coordinates” below). The island composes approximately 99 percent of the territory now under the ROC government’s jurisdiction.

Taiwan proper can be divided into five major physiographical regions: mountain ranges, volcanic mountains, foothills, tablelands, and coastal plains and basins. The most prominent geological characteristics of the island are the result of tectonic movement (see “Earthquakes” section). The mountain ranges that run down its center constitute a large tilted fault block, and on the east side of the island, a longitudinal fault valley stands between this fault block and the East Coast Mountains 海岸山脈. The slopes of the block’s western flank descend gradually, giving way to fertile coastal plains where the bulk of the population lives and where most industrial and agricultural activity is concentrated.

The shoreline of Taiwan proper is largely unbroken; coral reefs are found

around the island’s southernmost tip as well as off Taitung County 臺東縣 in eastern Taiwan.

Mountain Ranges

Taiwan’s five longitudinal mountain ranges, which are mostly forested, occupy nearly half of the island. There are more than 200 peaks rising higher than 3,000 meters above sea level, making for some of Taiwan’s most dramatic scenery. In addition, steep mountains over 1,000 meters high constitute about 31 percent of the island’s total land area. As a group, the mountain ranges extend 330 kilometers from north to south, almost the full length of the island, and an average of about 80 kilometers from east to west. The highest peak in Taiwan—and in Northeast Asia—is Jade Mountain (Yushan) 玉山 at 3,952 meters.

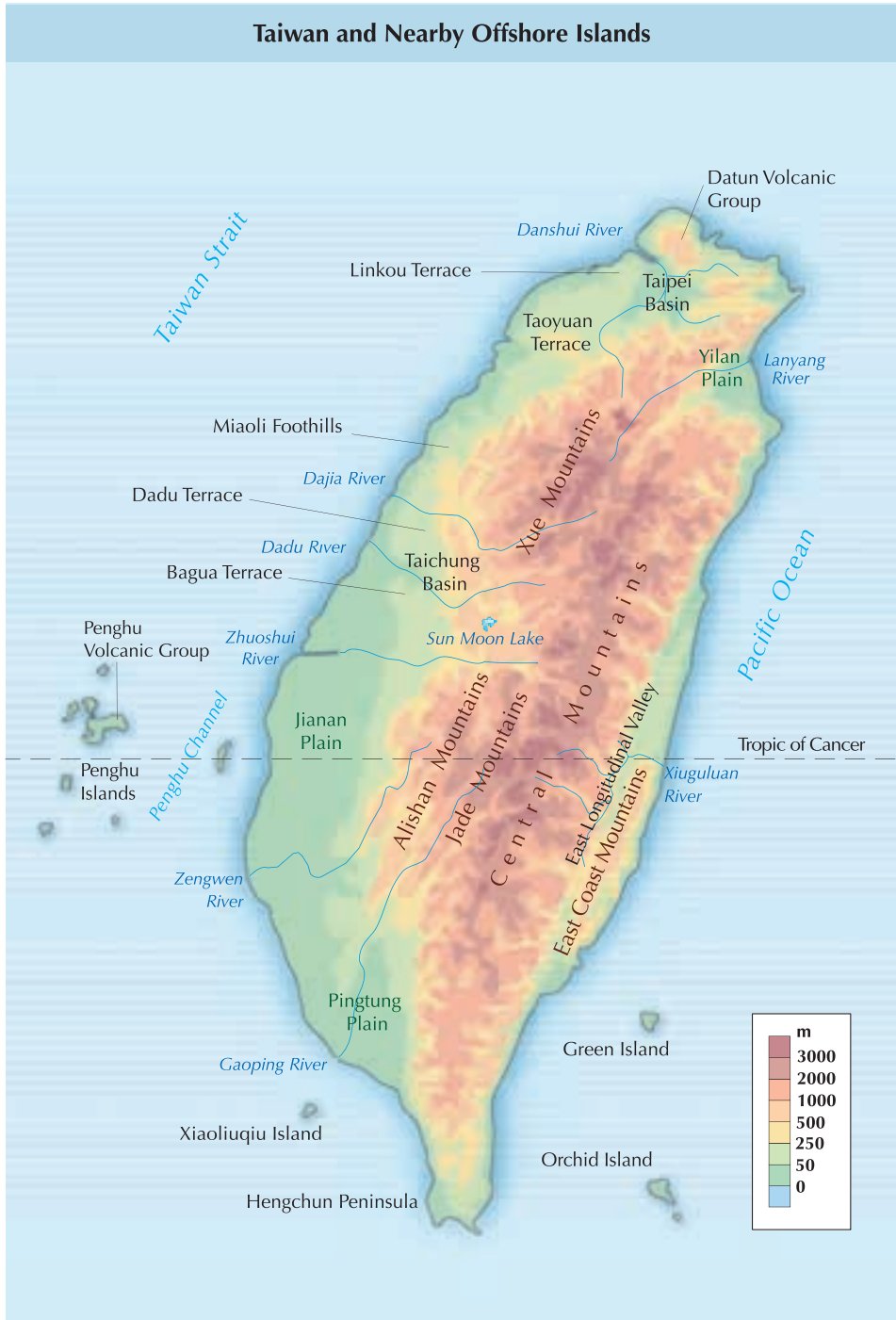
Extending down the eastern half of Taiwan proper, the Central Mountains 中央山脈 serve as the island’s major watershed. The range is mostly composed of hard rock formations resistant to weathering and erosion, although in some parts, heavy rain has scarred mountainsides with gorges and sharp valleys. The Xue Mountains 雪山山脈 lie to the northwest of the Central Mountains, gaining in elevation as they extend southward. Named after their highest peak, the Jade Mountains 玉山山脈 run along the southwestern flank of the Central Mountains. To the Jade

Area and Geographical Coordinates

<i>Total Taiwan Area*</i> (sq. km)	<i>No. of Islands</i>	<i>Coastline</i> (km)	<i>Longitude</i>	<i>Latitude</i>
36,008	86	1,566.3	Easternmost 124°34’09” Westernmost 119°18’03”	Northernmost 25°56’21” Southernmost 21°45’18”

*Not including Kinmen and Matsu; including reclaimed tidal land
Source: Ministry of the Interior

Taiwan and Nearby Offshore Islands



1 Geography

Mountains' west are the Alishan Mountains 阿里山山脈, with elevations of between 1,000 and 2,000 meters, while the East Coast Mountains consist primarily of large hills.

Volcanic Mountains

Small outcrops of igneous rock are scattered across the island, representing at least five periods of igneous activity. While Taiwan's many volcanoes are either extinct or dormant, geothermal activity has produced numerous hot springs across the island. Reputed for their therapeutic properties, the springs attract tens of thousands of foreign visitors each year. The Datun Mountain 大屯山 area, known for its hot springs and fumaroles, is a prominent group of 1,000-meter-high volcanic peaks between Keelung Port 基隆港 and the Danshui River 淡水河 that overlook Taipei 臺北.

Foothills

The island's foothills run in a narrow band around the central mountain ranges, widening in the west. Their topography includes low hills, longitudinal valleys and broad fault scarps. The western foothills are home to deposits of coal and oil. Traversed by three major rivers—the Dajia 大甲溪, the Dadu 大肚溪 and the Zhuoshui 濁水溪—the region between Fengyuan 豐原 (in Taichung 臺中) and Nantou 南投 is the widest section of foothills. It includes the Sun Moon Lake Basin 日月潭盆地 that rises 765 meters above sea level. Prominent foothills in southern Taiwan include the Chiayi-Pingtung 嘉義-屏東 belt and the Hengchun foothills, which occupy most of the Hengchun Peninsula 恆春半島.

Tablelands

Below the foothills, Taiwan's terrain gradually slopes down into tablelands

Taiwan's High Peaks (meters)

Jade Mountain 玉山	
Main Peak 主峰	3,952
Eastern Peak 東峰	3,869
Northern Peak 北峰	3,858
Southern Peak 南峰	3,844
Xue Mountain 雪山	3,886
Xiuguluan Mountain 秀姑巒山	3,825
Mabolasi (or Wulameng) Mountain 烏拉孟山	3,785
Nanhu Mountain 南湖大山	3,742
Central Range Point 中央尖山	3,705
Guan Mountain 關山	3,668
Dongjun Mountain 東郡大山	3,619
Qilai Mountain 奇萊山	
Northern Peak 北峰	3,607
Main Peak 主峰	3,560
Xiangyang Mountain 向陽山	3,603
Dajian Mountain 大劍山	3,594
Cloud Peak 雲峰	3,564
Daxue Mountain 大雪山	3,530
Pintian Mountain 品田山	3,524
Dabajian Mountain 大霸尖山	3,492
Wuming Mountain 無明山	3,451
Hehuan Mountain 合歡山	3,417
Zhuoshe Mountain 卓社大山	3,369
Nenggao Mountain 能高山	
Southern Peak 南峰	3,349
Main Peak 主峰	3,262
Baigu Mountain 白姑大山	3,341
Dan Mountain 丹大山	3,340
Xinkang Mountain 新康山	3,331
Tao Mountain 桃山	3,325
Taroko Mountain 太魯閣大山	3,283

Source: Ministry of the Interior

at elevations of between 100 and 500 meters. These are thick deposits of sandstone gravel that were formed by eroded material washed down from higher areas, though some gravel beds may have been deposited near the sea before being raised up into flat-topped tablelands by recent tilting. The broadest tableland is the Taoyuan Terrace 桃園臺地 in northwest Taiwan, followed by the Houli Terrace 后里臺地 in Taichung, the Dadu 大度 and Bagua 八卦 terraces in Changhua

彰化, and the Hengchun Terrace 恆春臺地 in the south.

Coastal Plains and Basins

The foothills and tablelands merge into broad alluvial plains sitting at an average altitude of less than 100 meters above sea level. Composed mainly of gravel, sand and clay, these plains compose most of the 23 percent of Taiwan's land that is both level and arable. Wide tidal flats characterize the shore of the western plain, which faces the Taiwan Strait. Here, shore currents have built up a series of spits and sandbars, and many lagoons have been created through shoreward shifting of the sandbars. All of the larger rivers running through the plains have their sources in high mountains. After emerging from the foothills, they diverge into smaller channels that meander toward the ocean, forming large alluvial deltas. Many of these rivers and streams have been linked by irrigation and drainage canals.

The vast Jianan Plain 嘉南平原 in southwestern Taiwan extends from Changhua in central Taiwan to Kaohsiung 高雄 in the south and accounts for 12 percent of Taiwan's total land area. Next largest are the Pingtung Plain 屏東平原 in the south and the Yilan Plain 宜蘭平原 in the northeast. There are two major basins in Taiwan, the Taipei Basin 臺北盆地 and the Taichung Basin 臺中盆地. Over in eastern Taiwan, the narrow East Rift Valley 花東縱谷 sits about 120 meters above sea level.

Rivers and Lakes

There are 151 rivers and streams in Taiwan. The Zhuoshui River in central Taiwan is the longest (187 kilometers) while the Gaoping River 高屏溪 in the south has the largest drainage basin (3,257 square kilometers). The Central

Mountains are Taiwan's main watershed; thus most of its rivers and streams flow either eastward or westward. They are generally short and steep, especially in the east, and can become torrential during rainstorms when they carry large amounts of mud and silt. Despite abundant rainfall in summer, water can be scarce due to the rapid flow of these rivers (see "Climate" section). On the plains, riverbeds tend to be wide and shallow, forming challenges for the management and development of water resources.

Most of Taiwan's lakes are situated in the west, and many are used as reservoirs. Sun Moon Lake in Nantou County, with an area of 8 square kilometers and a depth of 30 meters, is the island's largest and deepest lake. The next largest lakes on the island are Longluan Lake 龍鑾潭 on the Hengchun Peninsula and Liyu Lake 鯉魚潭 in Hualien County 花蓮縣, both of which have an area of around 1 square kilometer. There are also a dozen alpine lakes in the Xue Mountains and the Central Mountains. The highest among them are oval-shaped Cui Lake 翠湖 in the Xue

Hot and Distinct Springs in Taiwan

Taiwan is among the world's top hot spring sites. Over 100 spring locations have been found in Taiwan. While the Datun Mountain area in northern Taiwan has the highest density of hot springs, 80 percent of Taiwan's springs are scattered along the flanks of the Central Mountains from Yilan 宜蘭 in the north to Pingtung 屏東 in the south.

Taiwan also has some of the rarest types of springs in the world, including the carbonated "cold" springs consistently bubbling up at 22 degrees Celsius in Su-ao 蘇澳, the murky alkaline mud springs in Guanziling 關仔嶺 and the seabed hot springs that can be enjoyed in the open air on Green Island 綠島.

Major Rivers

<i>Name</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Drainage</i>	<i>Passes Through</i>
	<i>(km)</i>	<i>(sq. km)</i>	
Zhuoshui River 濁水溪	187	3,157	Nantou, Changhua, Chiayi and Yunlin counties
Gaoping River 高屏溪	171	3,257	Kaohsiung City and Pingtung County
Danshui River 淡水河	159	2,726	Taipei City, New Taipei City and Taoyuan County
Zengwen River 曾文溪	138	1,177	Tainan City, Chiayi County and Kaohsiung City
Dajia River 大甲溪	124	1,236	Taichung City, Yilan and Nantou counties
Wu River 烏溪	119	2,026	Taichung City, Changhua and Nantou counties
Da-an River 大安溪	96	758	Miaoli County and Taichung City
Beinan River 卑南溪	84	1,603	Taitung County
Beigang River 北港溪	82	645	Yunlin and Chiayi counties
Xiuguluan River 秀姑巒溪	81	1,790	Hualien and Taitung counties
Bazhang River 八掌溪	81	475	Chiayi County and Tainan City
Puzi River 朴子溪	76	427	Chiayi City and County
Lanyang River 蘭陽溪	73	978	Yilan County
Jishui River 急水溪	65	379	Tainan City
Touqian River 頭前溪	63	566	Hsinchu City and County
Erren River 二仁溪	61	339	Tainan and Kaohsiung cities
Houlong River 後龍溪	58	537	Miaoli County
Hualien River 花蓮溪	57	1,507	Hualien County
Zhonggang River 中港溪	54	446	Hsinchu and Miaoli counties
Heping River 和平溪	48	561	Yilan and Hualien counties
Fengshan River 鳳山溪	45	250	Hsinchu County
Donggang River 東港溪	44	472	Pingtung County
Yanshui River 鹽水溪	41	340	Tainan City
Agongdian River 阿公店溪	38	137	Kaohsiung City
Sichong River 四重溪	32	125	Pingtung County

Source: Water Resources Agency, Ministry of Economic Affairs

Mountains and sapphire-colored Jiaming Lake 嘉明湖 in the southern Central Mountains, both of which sit at over 3,300 meters above sea level.

Special Landforms

Taiwan is endowed with rich coastal landforms. Yehliu 野柳 on the northeast coast is famous for its ocean-eroded rock formations such as sea cliffs, abrasion platforms, sea caves and stacks, and rocks in unique shapes. Although Taiwan is well-known for its lush green mountains, badlands also exist at the western foot of the East Coast Mountains and other hilly areas where softer

sedimentary rocks and clay-rich soils have been extensively eroded by wind and water. These distinctive landscapes, featuring barren, rugged slopes and deep narrow gullies, are known to the locals as “flaming mountains” 火炎山 (such as those in Sanyi 三義) and “moon world” 月世界 (such as Taitung’s Liji Badlands 利吉惡地). Mud volcanoes, often found in overpressured gas-rich mud layers, are located mainly in Tainan 臺南, Kaohsiung and Taitung. The Taroko Gorge 太魯閣峽谷 is world-renowned for its magnificent array of marble valleys deeply cut by the erosive power of the Liwu River 立霧溪.

Flora and Fauna

Taiwan's wide range of climatic zones and its contrasting topographies have endowed the island with a rich diversity of flora and fauna. Over 50,000 animal and plant species—2.9 percent of the world's total—thrive on the island, which accounts for only 0.025 percent of the world's total land mass. Of marine life, Taiwan's waters are home to 10 percent of the world's species. Some 110 species of mammals, 500 species of birds, 100 species of reptiles, 38 species of amphibians, 3,000 species of fish and 20,000 identified species of insects (including around 400 butterfly species) are known to inhabit Taiwan. The island's abundant plant life comprises 600 species of ferns, 4,000 species of angiosperms and about 70 species of gymnosperms.

A number of Taiwan's plants, amphibians and freshwater fishes are relict species for which Taiwan served as a haven during glacial periods. Upon the retreat

of the ice sheets, the distribution of their relatives gradually shifted north or up into the Himalayan Mountains, leaving them secluded on Taiwan. The populations that survived in the mountains of Taiwan eventually diverged from their ancestors, becoming unique endemic species.

According to the *Catalog of Life in Taiwan* 臺灣物種名錄 maintained by the Academia Sinica's Biodiversity Research Center 中央研究院生物多樣性研究中心, around 25 percent of the plant species, 64 percent of mammals, 18 percent of resident birds, 31 percent of non-marine reptiles, 27 percent of amphibians and 62.5 percent of insects found on the island are endemic to Taiwan. Some well-known endemic species or sub-species include Formosan serow 臺灣長鬃山羊, Formosan macaques 臺灣獼猴, Mikado pheasant 帝雉, Formosan blue magpie 臺灣藍鵲, Swinhoe's pheasant 藍腹鷓, Taipei green tree frog 臺北樹蛙, Formosan salamander 臺灣山椒魚, Formosan landlocked salmon 櫻花鉤吻鮭, paradise fish 蓋斑鬥魚,



"The Queen's Head" rock formation in Yehliu on the north coast of Taiwan. (Hong Chong-fu, courtesy of the Tourism Bureau)

1 Geography



A Formosan Blue Magpie rests on a branch of a tung oil tree in Emei Township, Hsinchu County. (Courtesy of the Council for Hakka Affairs)

Taitung cycad 臺東蘇鐵, Formosan amenotaxus 臺灣穗花杉, Taiwan beech 臺灣山毛櫸 and some varieties of orchid plants.

Climate

Taiwan, which straddles the Tropic of Cancer and is situated off the east coast of Asia in the path of warm ocean currents, generally enjoys an oceanic and subtropical monsoon climate. Summers are long with high humidity, while winters are short and usually mild. Mean monthly temperatures range from 15 to 20 degrees Celsius in winter to around 28 degrees Celsius in summer. Although winters are generally mild, temperatures can sometimes drop suddenly to below 10 degrees Celsius due to cold fronts from the Chinese mainland, causing agricultural and fishery losses. The highest and lowest urban temperatures were recorded in Taitung (40.2 degrees Celsius in May 2004) and Taichung (-1.0 degree Celsius in February 1901). Over the past 100 years, the average temperature in Taiwan has increased by about 0.8

degree Celsius, and in urban areas, by 1.4 degrees Celsius.

Taiwan's annual weather patterns are strongly influenced by the East Asian monsoonal flow. The winter monsoon lasts from October to late March and brings steady rain to northeastern Taiwan, while the central and southern parts of the island experience mostly sunny winters. Many of Taiwan's offshore islands are buffeted by powerful winds during this time. Strong winter monsoons blowing over the southern tip of the Central Mountains and down to the Hengchun Peninsula are usually referred to as the "downslope wind" 落山風, while those sweeping over the northern county of Hsinchu 新竹 are nicknamed *jiu jiang feng* 九降風 (meaning "winds of the ninth lunar month").

Dust storms from the Chinese mainland brought by the northeast monsoons can at times affect air quality in early spring. The summer monsoon begins in May and June with the "plum rain" 梅雨 season (so named as it coincides with the plum season) and usually ends in late

September. Plum rains are the second-most important source of rainfall in Taiwan. During this period, the south experiences relatively high levels of precipitation while the north remains comparatively dry.

As Taiwan lies close to the tropical cyclone formation zone in the western North Pacific, summer months are also marked by frequent thunderstorms and typhoons, with an average of three to four typhoons hitting Taiwan each year. Though the strong winds and heavy rainfall that typhoons can bring often result in severe damage, the storms are also a significant source of water, and windward mountain slopes can receive as much as 300 millimeters of rainfall in just 24 hours. Gusty winds brought by typhoons or tropical storms that move over the mountains and descend as hot and dry air on the leeward side sometimes cause foehn (called “burning wind” 焚風 locally) in the Taitung area that can damage plants and crops.

In August 2009, Typhoon Morakot made landfall on Taiwan’s eastern coast. However, its exceptionally heavy rainfall resulted in severe mudslides in southern Taiwan, claiming nearly 700 lives and causing considerable damage, including

losses of nearly US\$600 million in the agricultural sector alone. In October 2010, Typhoon Megi passed across the western portion of Taiwan. Although the typhoon did not make land, while interacting with the northeast monsoon, it triggered widespread flash flooding and landslides throughout the northeast part of the island. These caused 38 deaths, injured 96 people and resulted in considerable economic loss.

Mean annual rainfall on Taiwan proper is approximately 2,500 millimeters. Northern Taiwan generally sees greater precipitation, with 60 percent of its annual share falling between May and October, while the south receives 90 percent over the same period. Throughout Taiwan, November to February is the driest period. Due to an uneven distribution of rainfall, over 70 reservoirs and weirs have been built around the island to ensure a steady supply of water.

Earthquakes

Seismic activity is common in Taiwan due to the island’s location on the circum-Pacific seismic belt at the junction of the Manila and Ryukyu trenches along the west side of the Philippine Sea plate

Climate Statistics in Taiwan by Area (1981-2010)

City	Average Temperature (°C)			Average Annual Rainfall (mm)	Average Rainy Days per Year
	Annual	January	July		
Taipei	23.0	16.1	29.6	2,405	166
Keelung	22.6	16.0	29.3	3,772	198
Taichung	23.3	16.6	28.6	1,773	114
Hualien	23.4	18.0	28.5	2,177	154
Kaohsiung	25.1	19.3	29.2	1,855	87
Hengchun	25.1	20.7	28.4	2,022	113

Source: Central Weather Bureau, Ministry of Transportation and Communications

1 Geography

(PSP). Geologists have identified a total of 33 major active faults on the island.

According to the Central Weather Bureau 交通部中央氣象局, from 1994 to 2010, about 15,000 to 18,000 earthquakes occurred annually in Taiwan, of which around 800 to 1,000 were actually felt by people each year. The magnitude-7.3 earthquake which occurred on September 21, 1999 was the most catastrophic natural disaster in decades, with 2,415 people killed and more than 11,300 people injured.

The PSP and the Eurasian plate (EUP) converge at a rate of about 7 to 8 centimeters every year. This convergence, which created the uplift that formed Taiwan's Central Mountains, continues to subject most of the island to northwest-southeast compression. East of Taiwan, the PSP subducts northward beneath the EUP, while to the south of the island, the EUP underthrusts eastward beneath the PSP. Seismic activity in northeastern and southern Taiwan is associated with these two subduction zones.

Penghu

Comprising 64 islets, the 126.9-square-kilometer archipelago of the

Penghu Islands 澎湖群島, also known as the Pescadores, meaning “fishermen” in Portuguese, is located near the middle of the Taiwan Strait about 50 kilometers from Taiwan proper. The islands act as a natural demarcation between the East China Sea and the South China Sea and, in the past, were an important stopping point for ships operating in the Far East or traversing the Pacific. The islets are formed mostly of basalt and have relatively flat terrain resulting from long-term erosion. The highest point on the archipelago is on Mao Island 貓嶼 at 79 meters above sea level. The residents of Penghu County 澎湖縣 benefit from some arable land on the three main islands, but there are no perennial rivers. Winding coastlines form numerous natural harbors, and warm, shallow coastal waters favor the growth of coral.

The mean temperature in Penghu County is 23.5 degrees Celsius and annual rainfall, at 1,013 millimeters, is far below Taiwan's average. To compensate for the area's high evaporation rates caused by strong winds, eight reservoirs have been built (including one underground) and most households have their own wells.

Of the 64 Penghu islands, only 19 are inhabited, with over 70 percent of the

The Geology Act Adopted

Taiwan's Legislature passed the Geology Act 地質法 on November 16, 2010, requiring the government to carry out a nationwide geological survey and publicly disclose unstable areas. Under the new act, geological information will be stored in a national database, which will be maintained by the Central Geological Survey 中央地質調查所 under the Ministry of Economic Affairs and updated every five years. In addition, development plans for geologically unstable areas will go through an exhaustive survey process before being reviewed by a committee comprising experts in related fields and government officials.

The act empowers the government to inspect areas affected by geological events that could endanger public safety and help increase public access to land information. Obstruction of geological surveys and inspections is prohibited, with violators facing fines between NT\$100,000 (US\$3,160) and NT\$500,000 (US\$15,800). But public disclosure of geologically unstable land still requires the approval of a review committee.



Twin Heart Stone Weir in Qimei Township, Penghu County. (Xu Hong-zhi, courtesy of the Tourism Bureau)

population dwelling on Penghu proper, the largest island in the archipelago. The two other main islands, Xiyu 西嶼 and Baisha 白沙島, are connected by causeways as well as by the longest inter-island bridge in East Asia, the Cross-sea Bridge 澎湖跨海大橋.

In 2008, divers found undersea columns of basalt about 200 meters long and 10 meters tall near an uninhabited islet of the archipelago. They are believed to be the world's only such formations.

Kinmen

The 12 islands of Kinmen 金門 (also known as Quemoy), totaling 150.5 square kilometers in area, are situated just off the southeastern coast of mainland China's Fujian Province 福建省. Blocking the mouth of Fujian's Xiamen Bay 廈門灣, they are at a highly strategic military location in the Taiwan Strait. Kinmen is about 150 kilometers from the Penghu Islands and 277 kilometers from Taiwan proper. The shortest distance between the main island of Kinmen and mainland

China, however, is just over 2 kilometers. Kinmen has a mean temperature of 20.5 degrees Celsius and an average annual rainfall of less than 1,000 millimeters.

Though its satellite islets are low and flat, Kinmen Island itself is hilly, with Taiwu Mountain's 太武山 summit being the island's highest point at 253 meters. Most of Kinmen's rivers are short and narrow with unsteady flows, and reservoirs have been constructed to ensure an adequate water supply. Zigan Port 子感港, located in Liaoluo Bay 料羅灣 on Kinmen Island's southern coast, is deep enough to accommodate ships of several thousand tonnes.

Matsu

Collectively administered as Lienchiang County 連江縣, Matsu 馬祖 is a minor archipelago of 36 rugged islands totaling 29.6 square kilometers in area. It is located at the mouth of the Chinese mainland's Min River 閩江, less than 1 kilometer from the mainland's coast and more than 210 kilometers from Keelung in northern Taiwan.

1 Geography

With an area of 10.6 square kilometers, Nangan 南竿 is the largest and most populous island, boasting two harbors—Fu-ao 福澳 and Matsu. Other major islands among the group include Beigan 北竿, Gaodeng 高登 and Liang Island 亮島. The Matsu Islands were formed by an uplift of igneous rock, and granite is the main natural resource. The mean temperature here is 18.8 degrees Celsius, while average annual rainfall is about 1,035 millimeters.

Although the archipelago's hilly terrain is not naturally suited to agriculture, eight reservoirs have been constructed and 320 irrigation wells drilled to facilitate farming. This has enabled Matsu to become self-sufficient in vegetable production.

Other Islands

Located off the Pacific coast of Taiwan, Green Island 綠島 and Orchid Island 蘭嶼 are two hilly, volcanic islands surrounded by coral reefs and abundant sea life. Green Island sits 33 kilometers east of Taiwan proper with an area of approximately 15 square kilometers, and is home to Zhaori Hot Springs 朝日溫泉, one of the world's three saltwater hot springs. Orchid Island, which lies 83 kilometers off the southeast coast of Taiwan, is inhabited by the indigenous Yami 雅美 people (see Chapter 2, "People and Language"). The island has an area of 47 square kilometers, making it Taiwan's second-largest offshore island after Penghu.

Sitting just off the southwest coast of Taiwan proper, Xiaoliuqiu 小琉球 is one of the largest coral islands in the world at 6.8 square kilometers. The unique coral formations found here were created by eons of wind and rain erosion. Much of the coral is a brilliant crimson as it is composed primarily of iron and silicon oxides.

In addition, the ROC maintains a historical claim to four groups of islands scattered over a vast area in the South China Sea that is surrounded by rich fishing grounds and gas and oil deposits. These are the Dongsha (Pratas) Islands 東沙群島, the Nansha (Spratly) Islands 南沙群島, the Xisha (Paracel) Islands 西沙群島 and the Zhongsha Islands (Macclesfield Bank) 中沙群島. Currently, the ROC's effective jurisdiction includes the Dongsha Islands, where a national park was established in 2007, as well as Taiping Island 太平島 and Zhongzhou Reef 中洲礁 of the Nansha Islands.

The Dongsha Islands are located 444 kilometers southwest of Kaohsiung and comprise Dongsha Island 東沙島—a coral atoll with an area of 2.38 square kilometers—and two coral reefs. In addition to being a source of fish and minerals, the islands are used as a coast guard outpost. A hospital, a power station, a satellite tracking facility and a runway have also been built on Dongsha Island.

With abundant fishing, mineral and petroleum resources, the Nansha Islands comprise more than 190 islets, reefs, cays and banks in an area extending 810 kilometers from north to south and 900 kilometers from east to west. Taiping Island, located 1,384 kilometers southwest of Kaohsiung, is the largest island in the group with an area of 0.49 square kilometer. The Coast Guard Administration 行政院海岸巡防署 has stationed personnel on Taiping Island, where a new runway was built in 2008.

In keeping with the ROC's peaceful intentions, the Dongsha Islands, Taiping Island and Zhongzhou Reef have been transferred from military to civilian control. In 2000, responsibility for defending these islands passed from the Ministry of National Defense to the Coast Guard Administration, while the

administration of the islands has been given to the Kaohsiung City government.

Finally, lying about 170 kilometers northeast of Taiwan proper is the Diaoyutai

Archipelago 釣魚臺列嶼, a tiny island group historically attached to the ROC that includes Diaoyutai Island 釣魚臺, Huangwei Islet 黃尾嶼 and Chiwei Islet 赤尾嶼.



- Ministry of the Interior: <http://www.moi.gov.tw>
- Central Weather Bureau: <http://www.cwb.gov.tw>
- Water Resources Agency: <http://www.wra.gov.tw>
- Central Geological Survey: <http://www.moeacgs.gov.tw>
- Penghu County Government: <http://www.penghu.gov.tw>
- Kinmen County Government: <http://www.kinmen.gov.tw>
- Lienchiang County Government: <http://www.matsu.gov.tw>
- Endemic Species Research Institute: <http://tesri.coa.gov.tw>
- Catalogue of Life in Taiwan: <http://taibnet.sinica.edu.tw>