



At Taiwan's Most Famous Scenic Lake

Bike Path Around Sun Moon Lake

Text & Photos: Editorial Dept

Sun Moon Lake's lovely natural setting combines mountain forests and tranquil waters. The nearby habitat teems with insects and birds, and lake fish include the well-known Sharpbelly and Redfin Culter. The area along Route 21 and the Dazhu Lake Nature Trail often has swarms of fireflies in April and May. There are also butterfly and peacock gardens around the lake.

The road around Sun Moon Lake is 33 kilometers long, and passes many famous scenic spots. If you take the trip in the clockwise direction, you can see the Wenwu Temple, Peacock Park,



▲ Since the route around Sun Moon Lake is an ordinary road, cyclists must pay close attention to cars in front and behind.

Sun Moon Springs, the Youth Activity Center, Yida Thao village, Hsuan Tzang Temple, Tzuen Pagoda, Hsuan Kuang Temple, and Meiho Garden. There are also many nature trails around the lake. Although it is more dangerous to travel around the lake in a clockwise direction, this is the best way to appreciate the lake's magnificent scenery. It's safer to walk and ride counterclockwise, hugging the mountain wall, but your field of view will be blocked by passing cars, and you won't be able to enjoy the full beauty of the lake.

If you feel that cycling the 33 kilometers around the lake is too difficult, you can also ride on the Yuehtan Ta - Peitou Village bike path. The distance from Hsuan Kuang Temple to the Mingtan outlet is roughly 8 kilometers. The scenery along the way is gorgeous, and the trip is well worth it. The bike path is also great for rides with the whole family. If you set off from the Hsuan Kuang Temple wharf, the outstanding view at the starting point includes a panoramic



▲ A panoramic view of Sun Moon Lake from the Tzuen Pagoda.

view of Lalu Island and the Lalu Peninsula. The bike path follows Route 21A towards Toushe, and there aren't any big hills. There is a scenery-viewing pavilion at the mouth of the No. 1 tunnel, and the bike path continues for approximately 4 kilometers after this point. The path ends at the Mingtan outlet. This is the only dedicated bike path around Sun Moon Lake. This winding route along the southern shore of the lake gives a good look at the local forest ecology.

As you continue to ride, you will be greeted by a spectacular view after emerging from a bamboo

grove. When you see the ranges of mountains, the water of the lake, the checkerboard pattern of rice fields, and old-style farmhouses of Toushe, you will think you have stumbled across a hidden Shangri-La. When you arrive at Toushe Dam, you can pause at the lakeside rest area and gaze at Qinglong Mountain descending into the lake. Hsuan Kuang Temple, Hsuan Tzang Temple, and Tzuen Pagoda can be seen along the ridgeline, and Lalu Island embellishes the surface of the lake. Looking in the other direction, you will see majestic Mt. Shuishe. The constantly changing mountain scenery is what makes Sun Moon Lake so deeply enchanting. When you arrive at the Mingtan outlet, you can continue onto Route 21 or return along the bike path.



▲ Riding into the serenely beautiful Toushe basin is an inspirational moment.

Scenic Attractions



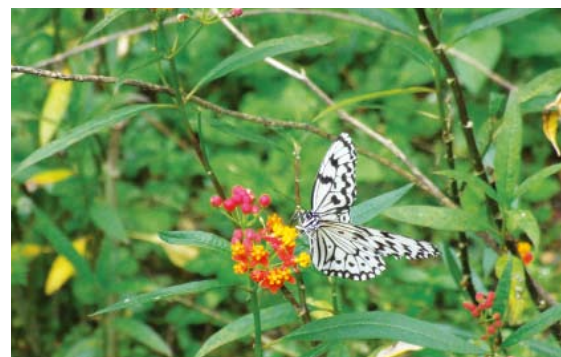
Wenwu Temple

This temple was built in 1938 to honor the scholar Confucius and the warrior Guan Gong. The top of the temple provides a panoramic view of Sun Moon Lake.



Butterfly Garden

A butterfly garden is located near the entrance to the Sun Moon Lake Youth Activity Center.



General Information About the Bicycle Route

Length	33 kilometers
Type	Ordinary road
Surface	Asphalt road
Slope	Significant continuous long up and down slopes
Chief places where food is available	Sun Moon Lake tourist shopping streets
Bicycle rentals	Sun Moon Lake tourist shopping streets
Restrooms	At all scenic spots along the route
Cycling features	Leisure, sports
Description of road	Since the route around the lake is an ordinary road, cyclists must watch carefully for cars approaching from in front and behind.
Other precautions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The visibility at Sun Moon Lake is best in the morning. Dawn is an ideal time to appreciate Sun Moon Lake. There are few outdoor lights; the area is not appropriate for cycling at night. 2. Persons who do not regularly engage in exercise may find the many hills around Sun Moon Lake to be very challenging; know your own ability and don't overdo it.
Transportation information	From the south: Exit the Second Central Freeway at the Mingjian Interchange. Take Route 16 from Mingjian towards Jiji and Shueiili; take Route 21 north to Sun Moon Lake.
From the north	Take Route 14 from the Wangtian Interchange towards Caotun; continue through Puli (on Route 21) to Yuchih and Sun Moon Lake.

Lalu Island

Lalu Island was formerly known as Guanghua Island. Lalu Island is actually the top of a hill that was submerged when the water level in Sun Moon Lake was raised. The island has long been dubbed the “floating island in the pearl lake,” and is a major attraction for sight-seers.



Hsuan Tzang Temple and Hsuan Kuang Temple

Hsuan Tzang was an honored Buddhist monk of the Tang Dynasty. The Japanese stole Hsuan Tzang’s relics from Nanjing during the Sino-Japanese War, and brought them to Zien Temple in Saitama Prefecture, Japan. Hsuan Tzang’s relics were ultimately returned to Taiwan in 1955, where they were first enshrined at the Hsuan Kuang Temple. The relics were later moved to the Hsuan Tzang Temple after it was completed in 1965. The Hsuan Kuang Temple is built in Tang Dynasty style, and is located in a lovely setting. Visitors can ring the “enlightening bell” at the top of the steps. Hsuan Kuang Temple is the viewpoint closest to Lalu Island; the dock in front of the temple is the bike path’s starting point.



Yida Thao Village

Yida Thao village was formerly known as Dehua village. The village contains a Thao culture village giving demonstrations of traditional aboriginal culture and song and dance.

Tzuen Pagoda

Tzuen Pagoda is a famous landmark at Sun Moon Lake, and was built by Chiang Kai-shek to commemorate his mother’s kindness. It was completed in 1971, and is located at an elevation of 954 meters on Mt. Shabalan. The 46-meter pagoda has nine stories. The top of the pagoda is at an elevation of exactly 1,000 meters above sea level.



Meiho Garden, Lalu Trail



Nature Trails

There are eight nature trails at Sun Moon Lake: the Songbolun, Dazhuhu, Shuiwatou, Tutingzai, Tzuen Pagoda, Mt. Shuishhe, Mt. Maokoulan, and Hanbi trails. These eight trails are located at various spots around Sun Moon Lake; some gradually wind along mountainsides, others mostly follow the lakeshore. The trails range from 80 meters to 2 kilometers in length.

