



# Experience the Warmth of Penghu on a Bike

Text & Photos: Editorial Dept



Penghu is one of Taiwan's well-known offshore vacation islands. Some people say that Penghu has two suns: one is in the sky, and the other is in the water. Although the climate in Penghu is often very hot, it is actually a very fun place. It is a fine area for cycling, strolling and window-shopping, aquatic sports, and sightseeing, and there are, historic sites, bars and fine food, In particular, the colorful fireworks festival attracts countless tourists to Penghu every year.

Penghu has a relaxing, exotic South Seas atmosphere, and it's a fun place for a vacation. Penghu also possesses unique natural and ecological features, including distinctive basalt formations, and it is a major birding destination. The extensive coastline is lined with flower-spangled meadows, and there are many fun water sports in the summertime. With more than 700 years of history, Penghu offers traditional architecture, quaint old lanes, time-worn temples, and old military installations.



▲ The Penghu County Government is strongly promoting bicycle tourism. County Chief Wang Chien-fa (second from left in the front row) led this excursion along the Guanyin Pavilion bike path.

### Relaxed cycling on offshore islands

The entire Penghu archipelago consists of 90 islands, the largest of which is the main island of Magong. The next largest islands, in order of size, are Xiyu, Baisha, Wangan, and Qimei. Magong, Baisha,



and Xiyu islands are connected by bridges, and are mutually accessible on a bicycle. A ferry connects these three main islands with Wangan and Qimei, which also have good cycling opportunities.

The Penghu archipelago is mostly flat, and Magong, Xiyu, and Baisha, in particular, have many gentle roads. Although Wangan and Qimei are a bit hillier, the uphill stretches are generally either short or long and gentle, and are not a big challenge for multi-speed bikes.

There are three main possibilities for cycling excursions on Penghu: The first is to ride through urban Magong, visit some historic sites, and enjoy the local dining. The second is to ride along County Road 203 in the direction of Baisha and Xiyu islands, and enjoy the spectacular scenery on each island; a one-way trip from Magong to Xiyu is approximately 35 km. The third possibility is to take the ferry to Wangan and Qimei islands, and savor the tranquility and unique sights on these islets.

One of the common features of offshore islands is a lack of cars, which makes cycling on Penghu very relaxing. And since there are hardly any motor vehicles at all on Wangan and Qimei, all the roads on



▲ The distinctively designed PH-Sea Shopping Mall sells any kind of Penghu specialty product and food that you might want.

these small islands are like bike paths. Visitors should remember that although there are many commercial establishments in Magong City, and food, drink, and supplies are easy to find in the city, more distant villages and other offshore islands are relatively isolated, so travelers should bring enough drinking water and

other necessary supplies.

Penghu attracts many travelers, and vacationers are most numerous in July and August. Because it's hard to reserve tickets and lodging during those months, and because of the blazing summer heat, it is not recommended that visitors go cycling on Penghu during the summer. In winter, the powerful northeast wind blows constantly, and few tourists visit the islands at this time. It is therefore suggested that travelers interested in cycling on Penghu visit from March to June or from September to November.

### Magong City

Most hotels and other business establishments on Penghu are located in urban Magong, which is also where most travelers can be found. While there are many local sites in and around Magong, but they are dispersed over a large area, and is not convenient to walk to some places. Since the city has very little traffic, riding a bike is one of the best ways to get around and see the city.



▲ Tianhou Temple, which has been listed as a Grade 1 historic site, is the oldest Matsu temple in the Taiwan area.

The many historic sites in the urban area include Tianhou Temple, the Shuncheng Gate, Shigong Temple, Wanjun Well, Zhongyang Street, Siyan Well, and the Penghu Reclamation Hall. There is also the old military dependents' village "Duxing Tenth Village," which is a reminder of the time when Penghu was considered a front-line battlefield. If you like window-shopping, many stores along Chungcheng Road and in the uniquely-designed PH-Sea Shopping Mall sell arts and crafts products, local aragonite stone, and specialty products. Magong remains a lively place at night, and you can enjoy the cool Penghu evening walking along the wharves or having some refreshment at a local pub.

### The Guanyin Pavilion Bike Path

Magong has its own bike path, which starts at the Guanyin Pavilion and follows the shoreline around the Guanyin Pavilion Waterside Recreation Area. If



▲ Located within the Guanyin Pavilion, the Siying Rainbow Bridge is a wonderful place for viewing the sunset, and the fireworks festival is held here.

you take the bike path, the first thing you see will be the Siying Rainbow Bridge. From the bridge, you will often see people swimming and playing in the water, which may make you want to get off your bike and get into the water yourself. Within Guanyin Pavilion, the bike path passes a scenic windmill and a wading fountain. This is also a good spot from which to see the sunset over Xiyu, which is another of Penghu's traditional Eight Sights. This area usually teems with visitors at sundown for this reason. The Guanyin Pavilion bike path is flat, safe, and has pleasing scenery.

### Magong-Baisha-Xiyu

Cyclists who don't mind riding a bit farther can leave Magong and follow County Road 203 north to Baisha Island. This route will take you past the wind farm at Zhongtun, the Penghu Aquarium on Baisha, and the ancient banyan tree at Tongliang, where you can stop for a cactus ice. You can then continue across the Trans-Oceanic Bridge to Xiyu, where you can tour a traditional village at Erkan and view the columnar basalt formation at Daguoye. If you want to push yourself even farther, you can continue to the end of County Road 203 near the Xiyu Fort. It is approximately 35 km from Magong to the Xiyu Fort; since



this is only a moderate distance, and the hills are all gentle, most experienced cyclists should not find this trip very difficult. However, since the weather can be scorching hot in Penghu, remember to bring plenty of water, and avoid riding right around midday in order to prevent heatstroke.

## Qimei

The name Qimei is full of romantic and epic connotations for most people from Taiwan. Since Qimei Island is not very big, a slow bike ride is an excellent way to appreciate the scenery. If you start from the docks at Nanhu Harbor, a complete trip around the island covering all the major scenic spots is roughly 25 km. Compared with the main island of Magong, Qimei has more hilly terrain, but nothing that ordinary multi-speed bicycles can't easily overcome.

After leaving the dock, you will climb up a small hill and soon reach the first attraction—Qimei's famous Seven Beauties Tomb. The island was actually originally known as "Dayu." But because seven virtuous women killed themselves by jumping into a well rather than endure a life of humiliation and shame, the



▲ According to legend, a pregnant woman longing for her fisherman husband to return from the sea was magically transformed into Looking for Her Husband Rock, in which form she will wait for centuries more.

island was renamed Qimei—"Seven Beauties"—to commemorate these legendary martyrs. The next site also relates the tale of an ill-fated woman. "Looking for Her Husband Rock" is shaped like a pregnant woman lying near the sea, and brings to mind the old times when local fishermen would set out to sea to earn their living; while their husbands were gone at sea, all the local women could do was to wait and worry at home.

The next landmark—Fenchazi—is a lone basalt rock column carved by the wind and waves from the



▲ This sea-carved platform, which looks a lot like the island of Taiwan, has been dubbed "Little Taiwan."



▲ Qimei has several uphill stretches, but nothing that a multi-speed bike cannot easily overcome.

island's rock standing in the sea near the shore. Continuing, you will see an interesting sea-carved platform known as "Cow Plateau." Another sea-eroded platform to the left is known as "Little Taiwan" because its shape resembles that of the island of Taiwan.

When you arrive at Qimei's northeast cape, you will see the island's classic Twin Heart Stone Fish Trap, which was selected as "Penghu's Foremost Sight" for many years in a row and has now become an emblem of Penghu. Along with the legends of the Seven Beauties and Looking for Her Husband Rock,

the Twin Heart Fish Trap helps give Qimei its romantic atmosphere.

Actually, the Twin Heart Fish Trap is an example of the simple fish traps traditionally used by the people of Penghu. Local residents often used rocks to build semicircular stone weirs; after schools of fish swam into the traps at high tide, they became trapped in the pools after the tide went out, and the fishermen could easily catch them. Qimei's Twin Heart Fish Trap has been in existence for more than a century, but is still used to catch fish.