

Visit Tianliao, and Feel Whisked Away to the Moon!

Tianliao boasts Taiwan's largest concentration of active badlands and mud volcanoes, with its primitive yet beautifully forlorn landscape offering geology lessons in an 100% natural setting; its craggy, mercilessly barren terrain gives rise to a livestock-dominated economy, gourmet foods and other specialties, as well as a lakeside trail that meanders through tracts of land oddly reminiscent of the lunar surface.



Traffic information

- Public transportation**
- Airport** KMRT Kaohsiung International Airport Station (R4)→Take KMRT and get off at TRA Kaohsiung Station (R11)→Change to Kaohsiung Bus (8012) and get off at Gangshantou→Moon World (in Tianliao Dist.)
 - Kaohsiung International Airport:** Domestic (07)805-7630 / Abroad (07)805-7631
 - High Speed Rail & KMRT** THSR Zuoying Station (R16)→Take KMRT and get off at Gangshan South Station (R24)→Bus Red 70B→Gangshan→Alian→Moon World (in Tianliao Dist.)
 - Taiwan High Speed Rail :** 4066-3000
 - Kaohsiung Rapid Transit :** (07)793-8888
 - Gangdu Bus :** (07)366-1986
 - Bus & Train** Kaohsiung Train Station→Take Kaohsiung Bus (8012) and get off at Gangshantou→Moon World (in Tianliao Dist.)
 - Taiwan Railway :** (02)2191-0096
 - Transportation Bureau, Kaohsiung City Government :** (07)229-9825
 - Kaohsiung Bus :** (07)746-2141~5

- Driving**
- Southbound** Tainan→National Freeway No. 3 (get off at Tianliao Interchange)
Or take the Provincial Highway→Provincial Highway No. 28→Lujhu→Alian→Moon World (in Tianliao Dist.)
 - Northbound** Kaohsiung→National Freeway No. 10→National Freeway No. 3 (get off at Tianliao Interchange)
Or take the Provincial Highway→Nanzhi→Ciaotou→Gangshan→Alian→Moon World (in Tianliao Dist.)

Tourism Bureau of Kaohsiung City Government
No.132, Sec. 2, Guangfu Rd., Fongshan Dist., Kaohsiung City (07)799-5678
Tianliao District Office Kaohsiung City
No.71, Gang'an Rd., Tianliao Dist., Kaohsiung City (07)636-1475



Folklore

In addition to its signature badlands, Tianliao is known for the ever-crowded Danantian Fude Temple and Stone Temple, among other legendary, must-visit places of worship.

Danantian Fude Temple

Having been renovated twice throughout its three-century history, the Danantian Fude Temple famously holds the annual qigui (sacred offering of turtle-shaped cakes) to mark the Earth Lord's birthday on the 2nd day of the 2nd lunar month, when the entire Tianliao neighborhood comes alive.



No.107, Gang'an Rd., Tianliao Dist., Kaohsiung City (07)636-1565



Stone Temple & Cihsyuan Cultural Museum

The Stone Temple, which is actually a rear hall of Cixuan Shengtian Temple, launched a relief drive in 1994 to help Thai migrant workers who were financially strapped due to a labor dispute. While waiting to go back home, these grateful workers affixed what they found during their daily stone- and shell-hunting to the temple, which was being expanded at the time, turning it into what the locals call "Stone Temple." Sitting across from this peculiarly shaped temple is the Cixuan Museum, which showcases farming tools from a bygone era.

No.2-7, Sinsing Rd., Tianliao Dist., Kaohsiung City (07)636-1154

Culture & Craftsmanship



Tucked away at Qixing Village's Nanshi Lake, the more than century-old Lu's Ancestral Residence is the largest, best-preserved traditional residential cluster in Kaohsiung. This awesome example of early settlers' tu-que-cuo (brick huts) is also a multiple-winged Chinese courtyard house with two sequential rooms extending its depth, built with earthen "tu-que" bricks and masonry skills on a forward-titled foundation that encapsulates the patriarchal heritage. Without superfluous carvings or vibrant colors, it testifies to legacies of erstwhile Chinese settlements in the mountainous badlands.

Hanshih Workshop

Nestled among the slopes and bamboo groves, the studio features an outdoor café that offers refreshments alongside large-scale sculptures, which speak volumes about the passion of its owner, Zheng Bin, and his wife, Wu Yu-yan, for stone carving and pottery, respectively.

No.11-1, Guting Rd., Tianliao Dist., Kaohsiung City 0928-678-969



Souvenirs

Tianliao's barren, hill-encircled landscape causes its agricultural sector to be dominated by pig, goat or chicken farming, complemented with a food processing industry. Local produce, such as honey, bamboo shoots and pineapples, are transformed by farmers into delicious souvenirs that include the nice chewy, non-greasy and gift-worthy "Moon Town" salty pork from Tianliao District Farmers' Association.

The Yutian Co. on Chongde Old Street is a storied supplier of pickles that make perfect side dishes or congee ingredients. Popular among the locals, the store even gives away a simple pickle recipe for each purchase made there.



Pickled pineapples ▶

Honey

The Tianliao Farmers' Association was named the best Taiwanese honey producer in 2012 by Kaohsiung City Government, an achievement that underscores Tianliao's status as a honey production and marketing hub that also supplies its neighboring areas with longan honey ingredients.



Yutian Co. : No.106, Chongde Rd., Tianliao Dist., Kaohsiung City (07)636-6256

Tianliao District Farmers' Association : No.82, Gang'an Rd., Tianliao Dist., Kaohsiung City (07)636-15013

Staying Overnight in Tianliao

Tianliao's obscure yet excellent hot spring has been commercially tapped since 1938. At temperatures ranging from 18°C in summer to 21°C in winter, this seven-decade-old, mildly alkaline sodium bicarbonate spring still leaves bathers' skin feeling silky smooth. It's a great idea to spend one night in Tianliao for a soothing hot bath and mouth-watering local cuisine!

Spring Hill Resort

The steel- and stone-embellished Spring Hill Resort combines the luxury of private clubs and family-friendliness in its Zen-style guestrooms, Japanese "onsen" hot-spring bathing facilities and dining space.

No.111, Gangbei Rd., Tianliao Dist., Kaohsiung City (07)636-2288

Toucianyuan Leisure Restaurant

Already an eminent name in its neighborhood, Tou-Qian-Yuan Restaurant boasts a glass-paneled café ideal for relishing a laid-back afternoon tea amid the verdancy.

No.9, Chongde Rd., Tianliao Dist., Kaohsiung City (07)636-6687

Ta Kang Shan Golf Course

Highly popular in Southern Taiwan, this pro-level golf course is perfect for trying your hand at some tee shots!

No.1, Changshan Rd., Tianliao Dist., Kaohsiung City (07)636-6411



Moonwalking

Taiwan's first, and also most celebrated, "Moon World" refers to the badlands riddling Tianliao, where the relatively pristine terrain offers an unparalleled opportunity to observe such a geological phenomenon.

The Phenomenal Badlands

The slope-encircled Tianliao is characterized by rolling hills, crisscrossing valleys and a karst landscape towards its western Dagangshan area, where rain erosion gave rise to sawtooth ridges among other signs of a bizarrely barren terrain called "badlands." Geologically, Tianliao is the country's most renowned mudstone badlands scenic area.

Among the never-to-be-missed Tianliao attractions are a lakeside trail near the Moon World's Mudstone Interpretive Center, karst phenomena (the out-of-the-way Wulikeng, mud volcanoes in both Larger and Lesser Gunshui, a crevice called Dagangshan Yi-xian-tian, etc.) and gourmet delights, such as free-range chicken and mutton.

The Lakeside Trail in 'Moon World'

The Moon World is a collection of geological formations scattered throughout Tianliao District (Chongde and Guting Villages) and Neimen District (Ruishan Village). Good news is: a lakeside trail accessed near the Riyue Zen Buddhist Temple (in Chongde Village) now connects badland manifestations including Jade Pond, Moon Pond, "Ladder to Heaven", "Crescent Viewing Deck" and various other slopes and valleys. Strolling along the trail will give you the illusion of traversing the bleak lunar surface!



Wulikeng A Little-known Paradise

To visit Wulikeng, an area lying on the border of Guting and Xide Villages, take National Freeway No. 3 (get off at Tianliao Interchange), change to Provincial Highway No. 28 (move toward Qishan), enter Shuiku Lane (less than 1 kilometer past Moon World Scenic Area, on your left-hand side) and maneuver through the treacherous badlands terrain before reaching your destination.

People in Wulikeng, a relatively flat area among the badlands, build dams amidst mudstone hills for their aquafarms, which shine under the sun almost like natural lakes. Never ceasing to amaze, Wulikeng is a paradise far from urban bustle.



The Scenic Chaoyuan Temple

Behind the Chaoyuan Temple in Nan'an Village and toward the east end of Dagangshan Scenic Area, is a coral trail lined with naturally occurring, fantastic karst formations from Yi-xian-tian (narrow crevices), stalactites and Lover's Cave to Skinny Cave. If you're not in a hurry, the otherworldly Mipo Cave (a.k.a., "Bat Cave") is also worth stopping by.



Chaoyuan Temple

This more than 3-century-old temple is dedicated to Avalokiteshvara (a.k.a., Guanyin) and best known for the mystical clay statue of its first abbot, Master Zhijing, the ever-growing beard of which reaches below the knees!

No.107, Gang'an Rd., Tianliao Dist., Kaohsiung City (07)636-1565

Narrow Sky&Shihmuru (Stone Breasts)

Those who hike up behind Chaoyuan Temple (in Nan'an Village) are greeted by the sight of stalactites, a karst phenomenon referred to by early settlers as "sow's udders" because of their shapes as well as the fact that they remain dripping wet all year round.

After crossing a series of stone steps, you will find behind the temple a narrow crevice called Yi-xian-tian that separates two magnificent cliffs, both covered with swirls of waterfall-like stalactite strata. Guarding the crevice's end is a Ficus caulocarpa that traces an awe-inspiring, upward silhouette.

Access is via a trail behind Chaoyuan Temple

Narrow Hole

It's much easier to enter the Skinny Cave, a 20-minute climb from the Yi-xian-tian crevice, through its lower opening and exit through the upper one, but not the other way around. Since maneuvering through its winding hollow requires moving the body frequently, this aptly named cave serves as an effective motivator for those planning to shed some pounds.

Access is via a trail behind Chaoyuan Temple

Moon World Map



Moon World: Geological Facts & Glossary



Moon World is a swath of geologically distinctive badlands resulted from crustal rejuvenation, a long-term process that saw heavy rains and raging rivers wash away the sand and then deposit it on mudstones. Diastrophism, along with weathering and sedimentary mechanisms, transformed the sand-mudstone mixture into what we see today: tracts of land sustaining no plant life except shallow-rooted, drought- and salt-tolerant or maritime species (Yushan Cane, etc.).

At the entrance of Dagangshan Scenic Area, the Mudstone Interpretive Center offers insight into the mysterious Moon World through a collection of mudstone specimens and images.

Tianliao Moon World Mud Rock Geology Tourist Center :
No.34-1, Yueciou Rd., Tianliao Dist.,
Kaohsiung City 823 (07)636-7036
Open 10:00 AM-5:00 PM



Sawtooth ridge: a mountain ridge protruding at an acute angle like the sawtooth.



V-shaped valley: a long depression in the land surface, with a V-shaped cross section. It is a result of minor hillside gullies being eroded downward by runoff waters.

Grotto: a terrific diving spot formed when a ravine's loosely structured muddy deposits get washed away, leaving behind a tunnel-like hollow with partially collapsed roof.



Natural bridge: the mud deposits remaining in a "tunnel" that connects two adjacent grottos.

Mudflow: a small alluvial fan formed by mud washed down the ravine.



Mudcracks: the traces left behind by a mudflow that shrinks and cracks when dry.

Earth fingers: the finger-like protrusions that are the gravel-covered dirt residues left behind by rain.



Mud Volcanoes

A variation of badlands, mud volcanoes are faux-volcanoes formed when natural gas and mud erupt at high pressure along shallow rock fissures under the Earth's surface.

The Tianliao-Qishan stretch of Provincial Highway No. 28 meanders through Moon World besides 20-odd, variously sized mud volcanoes with intermittent eruptions, the severity of which depends on the subsurface pressure. The deposits of erupted mudflow were eroded by rain, leading to special geological formations such as those found in the Larger and Lesser Gunshui, two ideal places to observe mud volcanoes.



Lesser Gunshui (Siaogunshuei Mud Volcano)

Providing the best example of mud eruptions in Tianliao District, the Lesser Gunshui of Chongde Village features muddy craters with not only bubbles fizzing in them, but also a fluctuating water level that serves as a gas gauge: mud rising and falling rapidly indicates a huge amount of natural gas is being pushed up from the Earth's interior.

Larger Gunshui (Dagunshuei Mud Volcano)

There used to be mud gushing from the east half of a huge pond in Larger Gunshui, a part of Guting Village encircled by dense bamboo groves. Despite its drastically reduced eruptions in recent years, the pond remains noticeably effervescent with mud bubbles.



Local Cuisine

With an infertile landscape that makes farming unlikely, most Tianliao residents are engaged in free-range farming of chicken or goats, which made one of its villages, Chongde, a famous free-range chicken restaurant cluster in Southern Taiwan. For more than 20 years, Chongde Village's economic lifeblood has been free-range chicken wrapped in locally sourced volcanic mud and roasted in earthen ovens. This must-try, uniquely savory chicken dish is served by a mallet-wielding waiter who removes the hardened mud outer layer right in front of the guests, as if performing a fancy tableside show.

Using homegrown pineapple or bamboo-shoot pastes, the villagers artfully integrate scrumptious meat and a distinctive broth (known for its mellow, lingering aftertaste) into an intriguing list of recipes: chicken soup w/ pineapple & bitter melon, chicken soup w/ shredded bamboo shoots, and mutton stew w/ bamboo shoots, etc.

