

Taiwan: Birding & Nature

with Naturalist Journeys



April 10 – 20, 2024
w/ Okinawa & Amami Extension April 20 – 27, 2024

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Join Naturalist Journeys on this Taiwan birding tour to explore the many glorious habitats found on this island jewel, from the forested mountains of birder-magnets Dashueshan National Forest and Yushan National Park to the flooded agricultural fields and tea plantations of Puli and beyond. Spectacular pheasants, parrotbills, babblers, laughingthrushes, and flowerpeckers remind us we're in Asia, and we see (and hear) local orioles, warblers, and woodpeckers. Gorgeous landscapes, fascinating cuisine, and welcoming lodges add to what is sure to be the highlight of your birding year. An optional weeklong extension offers even more endemic birds and stunning scenery on the southern Japanese islands of Okinawa and Amami.

Tour Highlights

- Explore natural habitats from sea-level to 10,700 feet (Dayuling Pass) and from the northern part to the southern tip—only 250 miles on good roads
- Search for 30-33 Taiwanese endemic bird species, including two pheasants and two partridges
- Seek out mammals including macaques, giant flying squirrels, barking deer (muntjacs), serow, numerous bats, and the rare Taiwanese Black Bear
- Visit hot springs and waterfalls
- Experience Taiwan's Asian culture and food and, on the extension, compare it to two of the southern islands of Japan
- On the extension, fly north to two of Japan's Ryukyu Islands, Okinawa and Amami, for more subtropical island habitats and endemic species

Tour Summary

11-Day / 10-Night Taiwan Birding & Nature Tour

\$5290 DBL / \$5965 SGL, from Taipei

Airport is Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport (TPE)

Day-to-Day Itinerary

Itineraries are guidelines; variations in itinerary may occur to account for weather, road conditions, closures, etc. and to maximize your experience.

Wed., Apr. 10 Arrival in Taipei

Welcome to Taiwan! Arrive today at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport (TPE) and stay in a nearby hotel to

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prepare for an early departure tomorrow. Dinner tonight is casual and we take the opportunity to meet other travelers and your guides and go over the plan for the coming days.

Accommodations at an airport hotel (D)

Thurs., Apr. 11, & Fri., Apr. 12 Dasyueshan National Forest Recreation Area

Our tour to this beautiful island is focused on the many endemic bird species that reside here, and this mountain range is home to many. We start at a low elevation, home to Taiwan Barbet, Taiwan Hwamei, Taiwan Vivid Niltava, Rufous-capped Babbler, Collared Finchbill, and Gray Treepie. Then we wind our way up to the 6,500-foot altitude where we search for Taiwan Partridge and Swinhoe's and Mikado Pheasants, as well as several endemic songbirds, such as Chestnut-bellied and Taiwan Yellow Tits, Taiwan Yuhina, White-eared Sibia, Steere's Liocichla, Taiwan Thrush, and Taiwan Whistling-Thrush. We top out at 8,500 feet, seeking high elevation specialties such as Rusty and White-whiskered Laughingthrushes, Taiwan Fulvetta, Taiwan Bush Warbler, and possibly Taiwan Rosefinch. We look for the Muntjac (barking deer) wandering through the forests and thousand-year-old giant Taiwan red cypress trees.

Accommodations near Dasyueshan National Forest (B,L,D)

Sat., Apr. 13 Dasyueshan National Forest | Guguan

We may look for a few missed species in the Dasyueshan area this morning, then we're off to the village of Guguan, famous for its hiking trails, hot springs, and the Atayal people and their culture. It's a short, two-hour drive and we take our time, birding along the way. As for birds, it is home to the stunning Taiwan Blue Magpie, stunning Taiwan Barbet, Taiwan Bamboo-Partridge (not to be confused with Taiwan Partridge), and Gray-capped Woodpecker. There are several excellent birding trails in and around town—guide's choice!

Accommodations in Guguan (B,L,D)

Sun., April 14 Guguan to Puli

After morning birding at Guguan, we proceed a little over an hour due south to the town of Puli. It is a mellow lowland agricultural town with a variety of different architectural styles and a stunning monastery, nestled in the mountains and surrounded by flooded fields of water-bamboo and other crops. Puli hosts the Chung Tai Chan Monastery and the Temple of the Bright Light. We bird around Puli, focusing on wading birds and shorebirds and especially seeking the absolutely stunning Greater Painted-Snipe; other impressive shorebirds include Cinnamon Bittern, Gray-headed Lapwing, and Malayan Night Heron. Other birds include the Serpent Crested-Eagle, striking Maroon Oriole, beautiful Asian Emerald Dove, Chinese Sparrowhawk, and Forest Wagtail.

Accommodations in Puli (B,L,D)

Mon., Apr. 15 Dayuling Pass | Cingjing

We cross the Dayuling pass, at 10,744 feet the highest road in East Asia, to the Cingjing area (5,700-foot elevation). As we cross the pass, there are magnificent mountain views on a clear day and above-the-cloud views if the weather is right. We bird forests, scrub, tea gardens, and other areas of cultivation. Some of the star birds of the area are Rufous-crowned Laughingthrush, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, Taiwan Cupwing, Taiwan Barwing, Taiwan Shortwing, Flamecrest, and Taiwan Bullfinch.

Accommodations in Puli (B,L,D)

Tues., Apr. 16 Yushan National Park (Tataka Recreation Area) | Alishan

We head for Yushan National Park in the early morning. Tataka Recreation Area (8,500-foot elevation) in Yushan National Park is another excellent site for mountain views, Formosan Rock Macaque (the only non-human primate in Taiwan), and avian specialties, such as White-whiskered Laughingthrush, Taiwan Bush Warbler, Taiwan Fulvetta, and Collared Bush-Robin. It is another good site to find the stunning Mikado Pheasant. Some stands of bamboo are home to Golden Parrotbill, while nearby areas have the distinctive Black-necklaced Scimitar-Babbler and Spotted Nutcracker. Later in the day, we drop down to Kwanghua Village near Alishan, at about a 3,300-foot elevation, where giant cypress trees make a great impression.

Accommodations at Firefly Lodge or similar (B,L,D)

Wed., Apr. 17 Birding Kwanghua Village | Kwantien | Hengchun

We set our sights on finding the Swinhoe's Pheasant and the very shy Taiwan Partridge in a privately-owned broadleaf forest near Kwanghua Village. Then we drive to Kwantien, Tainan, to a small reserve where several pairs of Pheasant-tailed Jacanas reside—these stunning jacanas have colorings and tails reminiscent of Long-tailed Duck! After that, we're off to the southernmost tip of Taiwan—Hengchun, where we hope to see the endemic Styan's Bulbul.

Accommodations at Hengchun (B,L,D)

Thurs., Apr. 18 Hengchun | Inda Farm, Pingtung | Douliou

After birding and enjoying the ocean views in Hengchun, we drive an hour north along the western coastline to a private farm in Pingtung. The woodland and forest edge in this area is our best chance to see Black-naped Oriole, Taiwan Barbet, and other interesting species. Then, we head the hour and a half north to Douliou where we settle into our accommodations for the night.

Accommodations at Douliou (B,L,D)

Fri., Apr. 19 Xitou Nature Education Area

We bird at Xitou Nature Education Area in the morning for resident Scaly Thrush, White-eared Sibia, Taiwan Vivid Niltava, Black Drongo, and other mid-elevation birds. We may walk a 600-foot canopy walk 75 feet above the ground and explore the other bridges and attraction at the sight, walking the paved, easy trails amongst towering forests.

Accommodations at Douliou (B,L,D)

Sat., Apr. 20 Douliou | Huben | Departures or Extension

This morning, we bird in the forest around Huben, a good site for lowland endemics. We look for Black-necklaced and Taiwan Scimitar-Babblers, Morrison's Fulvetta, and White-bellied Erpornis. We even hope to bird along a trail behind the Tian-sheng Gong Temple. Then it's back to Taipei to catch late-night flights home; please book flights out after 11:00 PM. Or better yet ... stay on for the extension. (B,L,D)

Accommodations at City Suites Gateway Hotel (extension only)

Okinawa & Amami Extension

Sun., Apr. 21 Taipei | Okinawa | Yanbaru Forest

The extension takes us to two of the main Ryukyu Islands of Japan. This morning we fly from Taipei to Okinawa, then after lunch, we drive north to Yanbaru Forest where we start looking for Okinawa endemics instead of

Taiwan endemics. Yanbaru contains some of the last large surviving tracts of subtropical rainforest in Asia, with many endemic species of flora and fauna. We search for the flightless and endangered Okinawa Rail, the critically endangered Okinawa Woodpecker, Ryukyu Robin (Okinawa race), Elegant Scops Owl, and Northern Boobook.

Accommodations near Yanbaru Forest (B,L,D)

Mon., Apr. 22 & Tues., Apr. 23 Yanbaru Forest

In addition to the endemics we looked for yesterday, over the next two days we seek Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker, Varied Tit, Japanese Tit, Ryukyu Minivet, Ryukyu Green Pigeon, and Black Woodpigeon. The forest here hosts a dozen endemic plants, including tree-ferns, in addition to 11 endemic animals, including frogs, a newt, and a scarab beetle. We spend two full days exploring!

Accommodations near Yanbaru Forest (B,L,D)

Wed., Apr. 24 Kin Farmland | Okinawa Airport | Amami Oshima

We bird in the early morning at Kin Farmland, then we return to Okinawa Naha airport for the flight north to Amami Oshima. After arriving at Amami, a small limestone island, we stop by the hotel, then bird in the woods till dark. We hope to see Amami Woodcock, Ryukyu Robin (Amami race), Lidth's Jay, Ryukyu Flycatcher, White-backed Woodpecker (owstoni race), Ryukyu Green Pigeon, Black Woodpigeon, Amami Thrush (rare), and Amami Black Rabbit (hint: not a bird!).

Accommodations on Amami Oshima (B,L,D)

Thurs., Apr. 25 & Fri., Apr. 26 Amami Oshima

We have two full days of birding in this World Heritage Site! Cinnamon Bittern, Ruddy-breasted Crake, Elegant Scops Owl, and Ryukyu Minivet are also high on our list, in addition to the birds we looked for yesterday. We may visit the mangrove forests, the coral reefs, and the sea-turtle beaches, or look for whales offshore.

Accommodations on Amami Oshima (B,L,D)

Sat., Apr. 27 Departures from Amami

After some final birding and nature-watching at Amami, we drive to Amami airport. Our tour ends at the Amami airport; many will want to fly from Amami to Tokyo for international flights home in the afternoon. (B)

Tour Details

Cost of the Journey

The cost of the tour: \$5290 DBL / \$5965 SGL from Taipei.

Cost of the Tour Includes: Accommodations for 10 nights, meals as specified in the itinerary (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner), park entrance and other activity fees for activities as described in the itinerary, professional guide services, pre-departure materials and miscellaneous program expenses.

Cost does not Include: Round-trip airfare to and from Taipei, Taiwan. It does not include items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone, drinks from the bar; or gratuities for luggage handling or personal services.

Cost of the extension: \$3,990 DBL / \$4,665 SGL per person and does not include the cost of the internal flight (Taipei — Okinawa — Amami), which is estimated at around \$600 per person.

Travel Information

The airport for the main tour is Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport (TPE).

Please plan to arrive in time to meet the group for dinner on April 10. Please plan departures after 11:00 PM on January 20.

If you plan on taking the extension, please plan departures from the Amami Airport (ASJ) on April 27 in the afternoon. Firmer times will be sent to you when the extension is confirmed. Please note, it may make the most sense to book your international flights home from this extension from Tokyo.

Please ask for our travel agent's information and we can connect you to help make these flights.

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