TAROKO GORGE: NATURE AT ITS BEST
Taiwan’s national park is truly a feast to the mind and the eye for the uninitiated.

Mountainous array, soaring forests, natural setting, cultural essence - all this has formed the beauty of Taiwan in its primitive way. Taiwan is known for its towering mountains, and is reputable as a “Mountainous Island”.

The island is spotted with numerous mountains over 3,000 metres. It is also home to Northeast Asia’s highest mountain, Jade Mountain, which is nearly 4,000 metres in height. Taiwan has established six National Parks and 13 national scenic areas to preserve Taiwan’s best natural ecological environment and cultural sites. The Taroko Gorge at the Taroko National Park is one of these popular national parks at Taiwan.

Located in the eastern county of Hualien, the Taroko National Park measures 36 kilometres from north to south and 42 kilometres from east to west. The sinuous road, snakes along midway up 3,000-foot craggy cliffs that soar high above the river. The rushing water continues to etch out the gorge as it has for millennia. Sheer marble and granite formations tower hundreds of feet into the mist.

What really makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand at attention are the miles of 3-foot-wide trails carved into the face of mountain walls hundreds of feet above the ravine. The park area is also extremely rich in ecological resources.

gathering information

The Taroko National Park Visitor Centre and Headquarters is a one-stop-shop for information about the park, including up-to-date information on trail conditions. Some trails have been closed due to erosion, so it is a good idea to look into trail conditions before heading into the wilderness.

There is a photography exhibition as a preview to what visitors can see with the naked eye once they head out into the wilds and a play area designed to teach children about the natural environment. Adults can also learn about the geology of the region and history of the indigenous settlements of Taroko in more sophisticated exhibitions.

After park visitors get their bearings in the Visitor Center, it is high time to explore the park itself. Most visitors to Taroko Gorge are in for a day hike. There are quite a few routes that provide a mini-getaway for visitors. These routes are all less than three kilometres long and there are plenty of attractions to enjoy along the way.

Taroko Gorge provides the park’s most famous scenic attractions with sights of majestic mountain streams, the Eternal Spring Shrine, Swallows’ Grottoes, Tunnel of Nine Turns, and other scenes of outstanding beauty. The famous Paiyang Waterfall and the Qingshui Precipice are perfect expressions of the precipitous natural wonders of Taroko National Park. The gorge consists of a land of vertical precipices with narrow, picturesque ravine. The road section that extends from the entrance to the Taroko Gorge to Tianshiang is almost 20 kilometres.

Along the route, you are able to see all sorts of different types of terrain—sheer cliffs, broken ridges and terraces. The Swallow Grove and the Nine Curves Cave are the narrowest...
to the park. This is a fairly unencumbered way to experience Taroko Gorge. However one chooses to visit Taroko National Park, one can expect to find incredible sites with unimaginable view. The majesty of the stone formations is awe-striking and the flora and fauna are guaranteed to leave you with lasting memories of Taiwan.

geological formations

Both geologic uplifting and erosion by the Livu River simultaneously have resulted in the unique hundreds metres high wall formation, a phenomenon seldom found elsewhere in the world. In addition to this structure, there are also magnificent mountains, such as the pyramid-like Central Peak, and the dramatic Cijali Mountains which encapsulates the Taroko National Park.

If we study the geologic history of this area, it is not difficult to understand the origin of what we see today in Taroko. Uplifting, followed by river erosion had caused the formation of most of the geologic features in the area.

scenic tour

Indeed, Taroko National Park is a spectacular place to visit. The national park offers travelers a wildlife adventure for expert climbers or a leisurely stroll for occasional nature lovers among its ferny walls, mossy trees, echoing rivers and fauna.

Several tour bus services are offered to the park. Some tour packages include sites in Hualien along with a visit to Taroko Gorge. Able-bodied explorers can rent a scooter for about NT$500 per day in Sincheng and ride

Background of Taroko National Park

When Taroko National Park was eventually established on November 29, 1986, it was of special significance for the environmental protection movement in Taiwan: it showed that both the public and the government agencies had realised despite the nation's four decades of extraordinary economic success, serious damage was being done to its natural resources.

According to the National Park Act of the Republic of China (passed in 1972), parks are established to protect the natural scenery, historic relics and wildlife; to conserve natural resources; and to facilitate scientific research and promote environmental education.

There are now six national parks in Taiwan:
- Kenting National Park - the first to be established, includes a beautiful coast line, beach, and tropical forest.
- Yushan National Park - the largest, includes the mountain area of Taiwan.
- Yangmingshan National Park - the smallest, has a volcanic landmark.
- Taroko National Park - famous for its marble gorge.
- Shei-Pa National Park - famous for brook meau salmon (Oroichthys meau formosanus).
- Kinmen National Park - the park land area is the smallest one among all the national parks in Taiwan and its main goal to preserve historical battlefields and traditional villages.

The total area of these six national parks is more than 236,407,000 hectares (about 227,338 acres), approximately 8.43% of Taiwan's total area.
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