



TAIWAN: ENDEMIC BIRDING EXTRAVAGANZA

TOUR-SPECIFIC INFORMATION



Mikado Pheasant is one of the many Taiwanese endemics we will look for on this tour.

TOUR OUTLINE

This 12-day Taiwan birding tour focuses on the island's remarkable endemic birds, endemic subspecies, and East Asian specials. Taiwan supports 32 endemic bird species as well as numerous distinctive endemic subspecies and migrant birds moving along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

Our tour begins in Taipei before heading into the famous mountain birding areas of Dasyueshan, Alishan, and Yushan National Park. We will also spend time birding coastal wetlands, productive agricultural lowlands, and the fascinating Lanyu Island. Along the way we will search for Taiwan's endemic pheasants, laughingthrushes, robins, yuhinas, rosefinches, and many other specials.

If you arrive early in Taiwan (we recommend arriving at least a day before the tour starts) you may like to enjoy the city's many opportunities for sightseeing, with visitors able to enjoy temples, monuments, historic streets, museums, and night markets. Additionally, there are several excellent birding sites nearby to where we usually base ourselves in Taipei (New Taipei City) such as the Taipei Botanical Garden, Da'an Forest Park, and Huajiang Wild Duck Nature Park.

Taipei is very easy for foreign visitors to navigate, thanks to its safe, efficient, and user-friendly metro system, which has clear English signage and provides a convenient way to reach many of the city's main sights, restaurants, and shopping areas. Alternatively, e-hail taxis, such as Uber, work very easily (and quickly) throughout the city.

PACE OF TOUR

This is a moderately active birding tour, with most of the days involving rather long days out in the field, normally leaving our hotel around sunrise and only returning late in the afternoon.

The tour focuses heavily on finding Taiwan's endemic species, and therefore some days involve concentrated birding effort in specific locations. We also retain flexibility within the itinerary to maximize birding opportunities based on weather conditions and recent bird activity.

Optional night birding excursions will be offered where appropriate, particularly in the mountain forests where owls and nocturnal mammals may be encountered. Participation is entirely optional. The guide will discuss the following day's plans each evening.

WALKING AND STYLE OF BIRDING

This tour is generally considered easy to moderate in terms of physical exertion. Most birding is conducted from roadsides, forest tracks, scenic viewpoints, and short walking trails. Many of Taiwan's premier birding sites are accessible by vehicle, allowing us to cover a wide range of elevations and habitats efficiently.

Typical walks are between 0.5 and 1 mile (0.8–1.6 kilometers) and usually last less than two hours at a time. It is worth noting that some of these walks will be at high elevations such as in Dasyueshan National Forest, above 6,500 feet (2,000 meters), and some short forest walks around Alishan and Yushan National Park.

Most trails are well maintained, though some may be uneven, damp, or slippery following rain. Participants should be comfortable walking on forest paths and mountain roads.

Walking sticks or hiking poles are recommended for added stability and are required for participants who are unsteady on their feet.

MEALS

Taiwan offers an excellent and varied cuisine, blending Chinese, indigenous, Japanese, and local influences. Meals range from simple noodle and rice dishes to excellent seafood, dumplings, soups, and a variety of snacks sold in markets and convenience stores.

Convenience stores such as 7-Eleven and FamilyMart are ubiquitous in Taiwan and are an important part of daily life. They are useful for buying snacks, drinks, simple meals, coffee, toiletries, and other travel essentials, and can also be handy for cash withdrawals and basic services.

Breakfasts are mostly quite simple and are bought from convenience stores and then eaten out in the field or in the bus on our way to birding sites. Lunches vary between restaurant meals and convenience store meals depending on the day's itinerary and birding opportunities. Dinners are only occasionally eaten at our hotels, with most dinners eaten at restaurants nearby to our hotels.

LENGTH OF DRIVES

One of Taiwan's advantages as a birding destination is the relatively short distances between major birding sites, however, we will generally be out birding for the full day on most days of this tour.

Most transfers last two to four hours, usually broken up by birding stops.

SAFETY (INCLUDING ALTITUDE AND SEASICKNESS)

Taiwan is widely regarded as one of the safest countries in Asia and has excellent infrastructure, healthcare, and transportation systems. While normal travel precautions should always be exercised, participants generally find Taiwan to be a very comfortable and secure destination.

Altitude sickness is generally not considered to be a serious consideration on this tour as we only reach maximum altitudes of around 8,900 feet (~2,700 meters) in Dasyueshan and around 8,200 feet (~2,500 meters) in Alishan.

We will take a short (~two-hour) ferry crossing from Kenting to Lanyu Island and back again. The ferry is large and comfortable, however, if you are prone to seasickness, please ensure you organize anti-seasickness tablets before the start of the tour.

HEALTH, PESTS AND DANGEROUS ANIMALS

Taiwan has excellent medical facilities and a high standard of public health.

Mosquitoes can occur in lowland and wetland areas, particularly during warmer weather. Participants are advised to bring insect repellent and lightweight long-sleeved clothing. Malaria is

not considered a risk in Taiwan, and antimalarial medication is therefore not required.

Ticks are occasionally encountered in grassy habitats and forest edges, such as on Lanyu Island, where chiggers can cause scrub typhus, an illness which is usually easily treated with a dose of doxycycline. Wearing long trousers and conducting routine tick checks is recommended.

Venomous snakes occur in Taiwan, though encounters are uncommon and bites are extremely rare among birding groups. Participants should remain on established trails and follow guide instructions.

There are no particularly dangerous large mammals encountered on this tour.

TRANSPORTATION

Taiwan's road network is excellent and allows efficient access to birding sites throughout the island. Transportation will typically be provided by a large comfortable bus, appropriate to the final group size. Due to limited visibility from the bus (for birding purposes) we will ensure we disembark from the bus whenever there is a noteworthy sighting to enjoy. A seat-rotation policy will be used during the tour to ensure fairness for all participants.

While on Lanyu Island, bus rental is unavailable and so we will likely split the group into two vans during our short visit to the island.

Airport transfers on the official arrival and departure days are included in the tour price.

We will take a large comfortable ferry for the roughly two-hour crossing from Kenting to Lanyu Island (and back again). During this crossing, you can either stand outside to enjoy the seabirding or take a seat in the comfortable, air-conditioned interior. If the sea conditions are unsafe, access to the ship's outside areas may be limited or banned entirely.

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

There are no domestic flights included in this birding tour.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation throughout the tour is of a good to excellent standard.

We use a mixture of comfortable city hotels, mountain lodges, and locally owned accommodations that provide convenient access to the best birding locations.

Notable accommodation types include:

- Modern hotels in Taipei, Tainan and Douliu.
- Mountain lodges in the Dasyueshan region.
- Comfortable and clean homestyle accommodations in Kenting, Alishan, and Lanyu Island.

Laundry services and opportunities for doing laundry are rather limited on this tour, though are available at some accommodations. Laundry turnaround times can differ between locations, and would generally only be possible during multi-night stays.

ELECTRICITY

Taiwan uses 110-volt electricity with Type A and Type B outlets (the same as those commonly used in North America). Participants traveling from countries using different plug types should bring suitable adapters. Charging facilities are readily available throughout the tour.

A flashlight or headlamp is recommended for night birding excursions and for moving around accommodation grounds after dark.

WEATHER

This tour takes place during late spring, generally considered one of the best periods for birding in Taiwan.

Weather conditions can vary substantially depending on elevation. In the lowlands and coastal areas, temperatures are often warm and humid, typically ranging between 70–90°F (21–32°C). Mountain areas such as Dasyueshan and Alishan can be considerably cooler, especially during early mornings and evenings. Temperatures may drop below 45°F (7°C) at higher elevations.

Rain is possible at any time, particularly in mountain forests where mist and cloud cover are common.

Participants should therefore be prepared for:

- Warm, humid lowland conditions.
- Cool mountain mornings and evenings.
- Periodic rain showers.
- Occasional fog and mist in forested areas.

Layered clothing and waterproof outerwear are strongly recommended.

WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING AND OTHER ITEMS

Please also refer to our blog article "[What to Bring on a Birding Tour](#)" when preparing for this Taiwan birding adventure.

For our short Lanyu Island trip, we ask that you pack a small overnight bag, which can easily be carried onto the ferry, rather than carrying your large heavy travel bag. Your large travel bags will be safely stored on the mainland during our Lanyu Island trip.

If you particularly enjoy using a telescope, you may consider bringing your own telescope, however, please note that your Birding Ecotours leader will have a telescope for group use.

BOOKS

A Field Guide to the Birds of Taiwan – Mu-Chi Hsiao (2018), Wild Bird Society of Taipei.

Birds of East Asia – Mark Brazil (2009), Helm Field Guides, Helm.