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Alishan, Taiwan: A Super Detailed 2024 Guide

December 22, 2023 · Nick Kembel

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Alishan (阿里山 or Mt. Ali) in [Chiayi county](#) is one of [Taiwan's top attractions](#) and one of its most famous mountain resorts, along with [Qingjing Farm](#). Many visitors try to include Alishan on their [Taiwan itinerary](#), but it usually



turns out to be the most complicated part of their trip, especially getting there. That's why I've written this separate guide to [how to get to Alishan](#).

The Alishan National Scenic Area in Chiayi County, Central Taiwan is renowned for its misty forests, sunrises over a sea of clouds, views of Yushan (Taiwan's tallest mountain), the small gauge Alishan Forest Railway, cherry blossom viewing, and Taiwan's most famous tea, [Alishan High Mountain tea](#).

Below I'll introduce all the best things to do in Alishan, including interesting stops on the Alishan Forest Railway, tea farms you can slight at, amazing hikes, the best sunset and sunrise spots, where to stay in Alishan, and what to eat in Alishan. I'll also provide an Alishan itinerary to help you experience the best of this awesome destination in the most efficient way.

Some local expats write Alishan off as too touristy and spoiled by noisy tour groups. I have always loved Alishan though, even the touristy bits, but also the little-known spots, and I've been there half a dozen times in my 15 or so years of living and traveling around Taiwan.

Alishan can even be done as a [day trip from Taipei](#), though I don't recommend doing this. Also read about how I visited [Alishan with my two young kids](#)!



Hey, I'm Nick!

This website is my full-time passion project. I've always been drawn to the religious centers and spiritual sights of the world. After years of backpacking, I now call two places home: Edmonton, Canada and Taipei, Taiwan. When

Planning a [Taiwan trip](#)? Use Klook to get discounted rates on transportation, activities, entrance fees and more. I highly recommend it! [Sign up here](#) and you'll get NT\$100 off your first booking.



Find out how to get to this lesser-known Alishan sunrise viewing spot below

I'm not writing or compulsively planning every detail of our next family trip, I'm most likely playing kitty games with Sage and Lavender, my two kids.



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Best Alishan Tours

As I mentioned above, getting to Alishan can be quite complicated, and it's one of the most common questions I help travelers with in my [Taiwan Travel Planning group](#).

If you want to forget about all the logistics, including figuring out the bus and train times, and stress about missing them, then I recommend the following Alishan tours.

[Discover Alishan Tour](#): A guided day trip from Kaohsiung or Chiayi

[Alishan Day Tour](#): Another day tour option from Taichung, Chiayi, or Kaohsiung

[Alishan Day tour from Taichung](#): Visit as a long day trip from Central Taiwan



Alishan, Sun Moon Lake, and Cingjing Farm Tour: A 3-day tour
that includes other famous Taiwan places

What Makes Alishan So Special?



Alishan's haunting, mist-filled, ancient cedar and cypress forests



Alishan has been Taiwan's most popular mountain resort by visitor numbers for nearly a century. Along with [Sun Moon Lake](#) and [Taroko Gorge](#), it is one of the country's most famous scenic attractions. Located in Chiayi County and bordering Nantou County, almost exactly in the middle of Taiwan, Alishan is actually a **collection of peaks averaging 2500m** that overlook the massif of [Yushan \(Jade Mountain\)](#), Taiwan and Northeast Asia's highest mountain.

The area was original settled by aboriginals. In 1912, the Japanese opened the **Alishan Forest Railway to log cypress** trees in the area, but eventually logging decreased and tourists flooded in. Riding the small gauge train up from Chiayi (it currently only goes half way to Alishan; see my [Alishan transportation guide](#)), and between the various scenic areas of the park, is one of the great joys of visiting Alishan.

Due to its altitude, Alishan is always about **10 degrees cooler** than the main cities in Taiwan, making it a great respite from the heat. Its alpine forests feature giant Taiwanese red cypresses, many of which are 2000+ years old.

The forests on Alishan are regularly **shrouded in mist**, producing mystical scenes reminiscent of classical Chinese paintings, one of the reasons the park is so popular among visiting Chinese and Asian tourists.

Besides the many interesting things to do in Alishan, another big draw is the fact that [Alishan High Mountain Oolong Tea](#), the **most famous tea** in a



country that produces some of the [world's best oolong teas](#), is grown around Alishan.

However, most tourists pass right through the tea growing area without even realizing it. Most Alishan tea is grown not in Alishan National Scenic Area, but around Shizhuo (Shizhao) village further down the mountain.



Field of Alishan High Mountain tea, shot from [this hotel](#) (see details below)



Alishan has its own app! [Alipedia](#) contains info about Alishan weather, sunrise time and location, flower blooming status, buses, and more. But like many Taiwanese apps and websites the English can be confusing.

Learn more in my guide to the [best apps for Taiwan](#).

Seeing Cherry Blossoms at Alishan





The classic view of Alishan: cherry blossoms above an the Alishan train

One of the most incredible times to visit Alishan is when the cherry blossoms are blooming (see my [Taiwan cherry blossom guide](#)). Due to the altitude, this happens very late in the season, usually [March](#) and [April](#) (depending on that year's weather), and marks the end of the cherry blossom season in Taiwan.

If you are hoping to see the cherry blossoms in Alishan at this time, you'll have to book your hotel far, far in advance, as all the hotels always sell out, or you may just need to visit Alishan as a day trip if you can't get a room. Even



when it's not cherry blossom season, Alishan doesn't have many hotels, so it's always important to book well in advance. Travelers often report that they can't find any rooms in Alishan. [Book you Alishan hotel here!](#)

The best spot to see cherry blossoms at Alishan, where the above photo was taken, is called Cherry Blossom Railway Trail (櫻花鐵道) on GoogleMaps. I'll explain exactly how to get to it by train or on foot in the below guide.

For more information on visiting Alishan in different seasons, see the "best time to visit Alishan" section at the end of this article. You can also see my Alishan hotel recommendations toward the end of the article.

Maps of Alishan



I've custom-designed this Alishan map. Save it to your phone or right click + "open in new tab" to see a larger size of it.

Wrapping your head around the Alishan National Forest Recreation Area, how to get there, stopovers on the way there, hiking trails, and different train lines can be quite difficult. That's why I've designed the above Alishan map. This map should answer a lot of questions and includes several of the spots I'll be discussing in the below article.



For the detailed transportation times and info, you'll want to head over to my guide to getting to Alishan. Also, the below interactive GoogleMaps Alishan map shows all the locations I'll mention in this article.



Suggested Alishan Itinerary

If you don't have much time, or perhaps you couldn't get a hotel in Alishan, you might want to visit Alishan as a day trip. It's surely possible, but you won't be able to see sunrise, and you'll want to leave early so you don't miss the last bus back down the mountain.

If you're going on a day trip to Alishan, then I also recommend taking the bus the whole way there and back. The bus is faster than the train. Don't worry, you can still ride the Alishan Forest Railway sections inside the park after you get there.

Alishan Day Trip Schedule

If you go there in a single day, I recommend this schedule:

- Board one of the earliest buses to Alishan. Traveling time is two hours. See [bus times here](#).
- When you arrive at Alishan Bus Station, walk to Alishan Train Station (5 minutes, slightly uphill). You'll need to pay the Alishan entrance fee on the way. The entrance is TWD 300 per adult, or only 150 if you show the receipt for your bus ride to Alishan (and for students). If you're hungry, eat lunch in the tourist village.



- Ride the train to Chaoping (Zhaoping) station. From there, the famous walking route through the misty forest begins.
- From Chaoping station, follow the walking route to Shouzhen Temple and Shenmu (Sacred Tree) Station. You can do more hikes around there if you want.
- Take the train from Shenmu station back to Alishan Station.
- Explore the Alishan tourist village if you didn't before.
- Walk back to Alishan Bus Station and take the bus back to Chiayi (last bus departs 5:10 p.m.)

I will give more information about all the above points further below in this article.

Alishan Two Days Schedule

Two days (one night) is my recommended time for seeing Alishan. It's actually enough! Try to get there early in the afternoon so you can do a little hiking before the sun goes down, and see the sunset. Wake up super early for the sunrise, then you still have several more hours to hike before checking out. If you're going to Sun Moon Lake next, there's only one bus per day, but it conveniently leaves at 1 PM.

- Arrive at Alishan in the early afternoon. If you're coming from Sun



Moon Lake, the bus leaves at 8 AM and arrives at 11 AM. If you're coming from Chiayi, consider stopping at Fenqihu on the way (see more about that below).

- When you arrive in Alishan, have lunch/check into hotel.
- Do one of the hikes around Alishan (see below), watch the sunset (also see below), explore the tourist village, and/or eat dinner. After dinner, consider going on a Stargazing tour (also see below).
- Next morning, wake super early and hike (details below) or ride the train to see the sunrise.
- Walk from sunrise viewpoint back down to Chaoping station. Do the famous walking trail to Shouzhen Temple and Shenmu Station. Ride the train back to Alishan tourist village.
- Check out of hotel and take the bus back to Chiayi (stopping in Shizhuo or Fenqihu if you want), or bus to Sun Moon Lake (1 PM).

Alishan Three Days Schedule

If you want to spend longer in the area and see more than just the tourist bits, I recommend spending three days (two nights) in the area. Then you can spend a night in Fenqihu and/or Shizhuo on the way to Alishan, where you can hike through bamboo forests or sleep at an Alishan tea farm.



- On Day 1, ride the Alishan Forest Railway from Chiayi to Fenqihu and

check into [Fenqihu Hotel](#) or others in town. Go for a hike on one of the trails around town through bamboo forests.

- Alternatively, take a bus from Chiayi to Shizhuo (Shizhao), or take the Alishan Forest Railway from Chiayi to Fenqihu. Then spend the night on one of Shizhuo's tea farms. The hosts will pick you up from Shizhuo bus stop or Fenqihu Railway Station if you arrange it in advance. Or stay in one of the hotels closer to the highway in Shizhuo, which have good sunset views.
- On Day 2 and 3, follow the "Alishan two day schedule" above.

Again, I'll further explain all of these places and steps below!

Spend a Night in Chiayi First?

All of these Alishan itineraries require you to start in Chiayi. This city is the main access point to Alishan but also has some great local food and a few [cool things to do](#). If you're coming from somewhere else in Taiwan and arriving late in Chiayi, it may be a good idea to spend one night in Chiayi first so that you can get one of the earliest buses or trains to Alishan the next morning.

We had a good stay at **Chiayi King Hotel** ([see on Booking](#) /



[Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)), a modern, 3-star (but near budget priced) hotel near the Chiayi train station.

Other options include **Hotel Discover** ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)), which has great reviews and is super close to the train station and **Yongxing Inn** ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)), a basic but very cheap hotel also near the train station, while good hostel options nearby include **Petite Hostel** ([see prices](#) / [Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)) and **Light Hostel** ([read reviews](#) / [see prices](#)).

If you happen to be in Chiayi, also consider making a trip to the unique [mud hot spring](#) nearby in Tainan!

Places to Visit on the Way to Alishan

If you have more time, you can consider stopping for a few hours (or even overnight!) on the way to Alishan. Eryanping, Fenqihu, and Shizhuo are three excellent options. They feature a variety of hikes, tea farms, and scenic views. These spots are very much off-the-beaten track. Little English will be spoken,



but if you go the extra mile, these are some of my favorite places in all of Taiwan!

These three places are NOT in Alishan Forest Recreation Area. But because they are on the way to Alishan, and because Alishan tea is grown around them, some people consider them part of the greater Alishan area. You may also find that some of their hotels have 'Alishan' in their name.

But don't be confused and think that these places are in the famous Alishan tourist area.

Option 1: Eryanping Trail (Xiding)



The first notable stop on the way up to Alishan is [Eryanping Trail \(二延平山步道\)](#) and [Tea Mist trail \(茶霧之道\)](#) in Xiding area. This trail is famous for its incredible views of tea farms. The small network of trails (think lots of stairs!) to several lookout platforms with dramatic views is about 1-2 kilometers in total, but it's a steep uphill walk! It is one of the best sunrise and sunset spots in the greater Alishan area.

The trails pass through tea plantations where you can sometimes tea leaves



being picked. It's gorgeous at anytime of day, but especially at sunrise or sunset, when you can even sometimes see the famous sea of clouds that the Alishan region is famous for (see photo above).

If you have a very small car or scooter, you can drive all the way up to the lookout point. The [lookout platforms is here](#) and GoogleMaps will get you there.

To experience Eryanping for sunrise and/or sunset, you'll need to spend the night nearby. **SunSweet Hotel** (see on [Booking](#) / [Agoda](#)), which is a five-minute walk along the highway from the start of Tea Mist Trail. For dinner, the hotel can recommend some small restaurants in the area. Breakfast is served in the hotel. Tea lovers will also find that the hotel offers traditional Taiwanese tea ceremony, and there are many tea farms in the area.

A short walk or drive south of the Eryanping trail entrance is yet another lookout, called Xiding Lookout Platform (隙頂觀景臺), where lots of cars stop to take in the view. If you have your own vehicle (or don't mind a 45-minute walk), 游芭絲鄒宴餐廳-YUPASU is a Tsou tribe aboriginal restaurant with a view that one reader highly recommended.

The best stop to get off the bus at for Eryanping Trail is Anding (鞍頂). The best stop for SunSweet Hotel and Tea Mist Trail and is the next one, Lincuo (林厝). The traveling time by bus from Chiayi is 1 hr 10 minutes, and it's about



10 minutes before Shizhuo, and/or 50 minutes before Alishan.

Option 2: Fenqihu and Bamboo Forest

Cute little Fenqihu Village

The tiny mountain village of Fenqihu (奮起湖, sometimes spelled Fenchihu) was for years the terminal station of the Alishan Forest Railway line from Chiayi, since the final section from Fenqihu to Alishan was destroyed in a



typhoon in 2009. That means everyone taking the Alishan Forest Railway from Chiayi has to get off in Fenqihu and ride a bus the rest of the way to Alishan.

Starting a few years ago, the train now goes to two more stops after Fenqihu: Duolin and Shizilu. You can continue to those two stations and get the same bus to Alishan. But Fenqihu is still the most interesting place, so I still recommend getting off there.

Besides taking the Alishan Forest Railway from Chiayi to get there, you can also reach Fenqihu by bus. However, only some of the Chiayi to Alishan buses stop in Fenqihu. In order to do so, they have to make a 10-minute from the main highway, from the village of Shizhuo (see next entry).

Even if you aren't sleeping in Fenqihu, I suggest take a stroll through the village, eating a famous lunchbox, and maybe even going for a short hike around town. To see the bamboo forests around Fenqihu, try the hiking the start of the amazing [Fenrui Historic Trail \(奮瑞古道\)](#), which starts at the edge of town.



My friends hiking through bamboo forest around Fenqihu

I like this relaxed little town so much that I've actually made a trip to the area just to stay here with friends after we hiked the equally amazing Ruitai Historic Trail (瑞太古道).

Please note that this hike is quite remote and difficult to get to, so I don't recommend it unless you are more familiar with traveling in Taiwan and have extra time for it (you really need a whole day to reach it and hike it, and there are only a few buses per day to the starting point). If you want to try, get in



touch with me in [my group](#) and I'll share some info. For the average traveler, I recommend the Fenrui Trail (mentioned above).

Fenqihu is really a cute little town. When you first arrive at the station, you can take a picture beside the Alishan Forest Railway cars usually parked there. There's also a small train museum (see pic below).

An old-school Alishan train on display in Fenqihu



Fenqihu is also one of a handful of places in Taiwan famous for their lunchboxes, inspired by Japanese bento boxes when the Japanese built all these train lines around Taiwan. You will see them being sold from train-shaped stalls as soon as you get off the train, and probably masses of Taiwanese people and tourists sitting around eating them.

We bought our Fenqihu lunchbox from the original famous spot, **Fenqihu Hotel** ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)), which also happened to be the hotel where we stayed that night. My favorite part of the hotel was probably the super cute little wooden bathtubs in the hotel bathrooms!



Miniature bathtub in our room at Fenqihu Hotel



Famous Fenqihu lunchbox

The most famous lunchboxes in all of Taiwan are those sold at [Fulong Beach Train Station](#) in [New Taipei City](#). [Chishang](#) in [Taitung](#) is also famous for theirs!



The original lunchbox spot, with the real life guy in the sign below:





Locals pounding Fenqihu lunchboxes before the train arrives

If you're like me and don't eat meat, then you might want to go for this delicious stewed slab of tofu stuffed with delicious things, which I find at one of the food stalls on Fenqihu Old Street.



Delicious stuffed tofu in Fenqihu

Option 3: Shizhuo Tea Farms



[Long Yun Leisure Farm](#), a gorgeously situated hotel with rooms overlooking tea terraces.

Everybody knows that Taiwan's most famous tea, [Alishan High Mountain Oolong Tea](#), comes from the Alishan area. But few people know about Shizhuo (石棹, also spelled Shizhao), a picturesque tea village on highway up to Alishan, or a 10-minute drive south from Fenqihu Train Station, where much of the "Alishan" tea comes from.



This can really cause some confusion, as some travelers even book hotels in Shizhuo that have “Alishan” in their name, without realizing they are actually a whole hour’s drive away from Alishan scenic area!

Still Shizhuo is a stunning area, and staying on a tea farm there was one of my favorite experiences in Taiwan. It is very much off-the-beaten-track, so you won’t find much info about it online (besides here and [my brand new guide to Shizhuo!](#))

Virtually every bus from Chiayi to Alishan passes through Shizhuo on the way. There are a few hotels right along the highway around Shizhuo (see my recommendations below). They are convenient because the bus to Alishan passes by them, and some of them are even run by tea farms.

If you’d something more remote, there are also some gorgeous tea farms on the mountainside above town, heading in the direction of Fenqihu. A few you could walk to from the Shizhuo bus stop, but for ones that are further up (and the most beautiful!) the owners will usually be willing to pick you up from Fenqihu train station or Shizhuo bus station.

The mountainside where there farms are located also has a network of hiking trails between the farms, with names like Mist Trail, Sunset Trail, Tea Trail, Cloud Trail, and Sakura Trail. Here’s a map showing the hiking trails, which you can compare with GoogleMaps to get a pretty good idea of where the



trails begin.

At least one of these trails can be found [here on AllTrails](#), to give you an idea about walking times (budget about 30 min for Cloud trail, or 1 hour for tea Trail).



Map if Shizhuo tea hiking trails

If you are interested in Taiwanese tea (I happen to be very much so; see here



for my in depth [introduction to tea in Taiwan](#)), this place will be a heaven for you.

We spent the night at **Cuiti B&B** (see [on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)), the guesthouse in the photo below. It's located near the number 5 on the above map. It's one of the more remote and difficult-to-reach ones, but it was so beautiful.

The farm itself was so gorgeous that we didn't have to journey far from our room to enjoy amazing panoramas over tea fields, or we could just enjoy them from our bedroom window. We also did part of the Cloud Trail and visited a few other tea farms nearby.

The owner was kind of enough to pick us up from Fenqihu, take my kids and I on a walk though some of his tea fields where workers were picking tealeaves, and drive us to the bus stop in Shizhuo the next day.

Staying on this tea farm, drinking tea with the farmer, seeing the sunset over the plantation, and hiking through the tea fields was one of my best Taiwan experiences to date.

Be aware that they don't speak much (or any) English, and you should bring your own food to cook as there are no restaurants nearby. Breakfast is included.



Chia Yuen guesthouse and tea farm viewed from [Cuiti B&B](#), where we stayed

There are several other similar options in Shizhuo area. Note that none of them are really close to any bus stop. You'll need to walk anywhere from 10 to 45 minutes to any of these hotels, sometimes steeply uphill. For longer ones, most offer pick up from Shizhuo bus stop or Fenqihu train station if you ask.

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Longyun Leisure Farm ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)) is another remote one overlooking an incredible terraced tea field (see photo at top of this section) and is connected to the Cloud Trail. It is the closest to Fenqihu (and also includes free pickup), but furthest from the Shizhuo bus stop on the highway.

Other similar options to where we stayed include **Chia Yuen Homestay** ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)) next door to our guesthouse, **Alishan B&B Yunmingi** ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)) near the Sunset Trail.

Closest to the Mist Trail, highway, and Shizhuo bus stop (bus still a steep walk up) are **Siangting B&B** ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)) and **Green Incense Homestay** ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)).

If you want to stay in a hotel that is along the highway to Alishan, and closer to Shizhuo bus stop for getting to Chiayo and Alishan, then I recommend **Alishan Hinoki B&B** ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#)), which is run by a tea farming family and can even give you a quick look at their tea factory and farm.

Green Incense Homestay ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#)) is another great choice on a tea farm and just off the highway not too far from Shizhuo bus stop. Even the views from the rooms are excellent.

If those are full, you can try **SuWaNa** ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#)), which is 15



minutes walk east of town, or **Alishan Tea Homestay** (see [on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#)), which is 15 minutes walk south of town. There isn't much around these hotels, but they each have a bus stop closer to them than the one in Shizhuo.

Same view as above but at sunset. The guesthouse is known for its sunset (not sunrise) views due to its position.



Depending on where exactly you are staying in Shizhuo, you can see some really beautiful sunsets (most hotels) or sunrises (fewer spots) around there. It's best to ask your hotel for the best spots.

If your hotel doesn't have a tea farm, you can still see many tea farms even from the highway, or by going on some of the beautiful hikes that I mentioned above. You can also buy tea from many tea shops in town, many of which are run directly by the tea farms. **阿里山珠露茶-林園製茶 Lin Yuan Tea Factory** even offers tours of their tea farm – it's best to call ahead for a tour, but you may be able to join one if you just show up.

Alishan National Scenic Area

What most people refer to as “Alishan” is the collection of tourist facilities, short railway lines, and hiking trails on the northern tip of the Alishan National Forest Recreation Area. This is where the vast majority of visitors experience Alishan, and it is the most famous and popular of Taiwan's many mountain resorts and forest recreation areas.

Arriving and Getting to Hotels or Hiking Trails

If coming by bus from Chiayi (or train to Fenqihu + bus to Alishan), you will



arrive at the **Alishan Bus Station** (阿里山轉運站). The bus station is connected to a 7-11 just before the Alishan National Forest Recreation Area Official Entrance Gate (阿里山國家森林遊樂區入口售票亭 on GoogleMaps), where you pay the park entrance fee.

From the bus station, it is a 5-minute walk uphill to **Alishan Train Station**, where you can buy a ticket and board one of three small train lines of the Alishan Forest Railway (more on that below).

During this walk, you will pass through the **Alishan Entrance Gate**. There, you will need to pay the Alishan National Scenic Area entrance fee of TWD 300 (or 150 per if you show your bus ticket or student ID card), plus 100 parking fee if you arrive by car.

At the top of the hill, the train station will be on your right. On the left, if you go down the stairs, you'll be in the main tourist village.

There you'll find several souvenir shops, teashops, restaurants, Alishan Visitor's Center (which has excellent English maps available), and a post office with ATM. One cool thing to point out is that the 7-11 at the top of the tourist village is the highest 7-11 in all of Taiwan!

Almost all of **Alishan's hotels** are located on a road behind the tourist village. There's a set of stairs at the back of the parking lot going down to it. Only two



other hotels, Alishan House and Alishan Gou Hotel, are located elsewhere in the park, closer to the hiking trails (more on that below).

Wondering how to get to Alishan? Take the Alishan Forest Railway!

Alishan Train vs Electric Shuttle Bus



The best and coolest way to reach the hiking areas of Alishan are to take one

of the three small train lines. All three depart from Alishan Station. The Chushan Line goes to the sunrise viewpoint. Most people take the Choping Line to the cherry blossoms viewing area and Sister Ponds Trail. From Sister Ponds, most popular walk to Shouzheng Temple and Shenmu (Sacred tree) station, which is the third line, and ride it back to Alishan.

See my [transportation guide](#) for all the train times. You can [book these trains online](#), but it isn't necessary. You can also just buy a ticket at the platform when you arrive. Only the early morning sunrise train is very busy. You can book your sunrise train online, or at Alishan station in the afternoon (1:30 to 4:30 PM) one day before, or 30 min before train departs on the morning of the sunrise.

There is also a new Alishan E-bus (Alishan Electric Shuttle Bus). The bus is a little faster than the train, but not as cool as the train. Just like the train, the shuttle bus has three lines.

You can board the shuttle bus at the bus stop near Alishan train station ([exact location here](#)), or you can board it at Alishan Visitor's Center. The Chushan line goes to Chushan (just like the train), the sunrise viewpoint, but only in the daytime, not for sunrise, because there are some hiking trails and viewpoints up there. The Chaoping line goes just Chaoping station, also just like the train.



But the Xiangling bus line is different than the train. It can't go to Shenmu train station, because that one has no road access. So the Xianglin bus line goes to Shouzheng Temple, which is near Shenmu station.

All of these transportation options are definitely confusing. I recommend that you just take the train instead.

The Main Alishan Walking Trail: Sister Ponds



Misty forests of Alishan

The main walking trail in Alishan starts at Chaoping Station. It is called **Sister Ponds Trail**.

Before you start the hike, if you are visiting in spring (late March to early April), you will want to see the cherry blossoms near Chaoping Station. The place to see them is marked “櫻花鐵道” (cherry blossom train line) and



Plum Garden on GoogleMaps. This is where people take photos of the red Alishan trains driving past cherry blossoms. Note that if you don't want to take the train, you can actually walk from Alishan tourist village to here and Chaoping Station in about 20 minutes.

Sister Ponds trail features beautiful misty forests and huge trees. Even though it's the most popular and busiest trail, it's very beautiful, so I recommend it to all visitors. If you prefer to follow maps, the whole route can be walked on foot (with no trains or buses) by following [this AllTrails Map](#).

From Chaoping Station, follow the path beside the train tracks past [Alishan Gou Hotel](#) to the start of the Sister Ponds Trail.

The easiest walk would be to only walk this trail and go back to Chaoping Station (around 30 minutes). However, most people follow the trail all the way to Shouzhen Temple and Shenmu Station, then take the train from Shenmu back to Alishan.

It's a good idea to get a map from Alishan Visitor's Center before setting out. The trails are quite easy to follow, but some visitors still get a little disoriented or lost. In total, it will take about 2 hours to walk from Chaoping to Shenmu. You could do it in 1 hour if you go fast, or 3 hours if you go slow and also walk the **Giant Tree Trail** around Shenmu station.



The larger of the two “Sister Ponds” on the most touristy trail in Alishan

After passing the two pretty ponds, the trail goes through **Magnolia Garden** (木蘭園), where you can see more flowert blossoms in spring.

The trail then reaches **Shouzheng Temple** (阿里山受鎮宮), where there is a collection of food and souvenir stalls. Some great snacks on offer include tea eggs (yummier than the ones at 7-Eleven!), sausages, stewed tofu, steamed yams, and drinks with jelly balls made from saturated seeds of mountain plants.

^

If you want to call it quits here, you can walk back to the tourist village along the car road (20 min). You can also ride the E-bus from Shouzhen temple back to Alishan Visitor's Center. Otherwise, continue hiking to Shenmu station, which isn't too far from here.

delicious tea eggs



Snacks and souvenirs near Shouzhen Temple



Shouzheng Temple, with a view of Dashan, Alishan's highest peak

From Shouzheng Temple, there are two options to connect to another circuit of trails around **Shenmu train station**, which has no vehicle access. From the middle of all the food vendors, there's a staircase leading to a trail called **Giant Tree Trail** (巨木群棧道). The loop trail features several enormous trees, the oldest of which is marked Alishan No.28 Giant Tree on GoogleMaps and is some 2300 years old.

The other option is to cross the "Boat Shaped Bridge" on the main road near



Shouzhen Temple to reach the same trails.

2300-year-old “Tree #28”, shot while raining

At the bottom end of circuit, there is an amazing **sunset spot**, which is called “**Ciyun Temple Scenery**” and located [here on GoogleMaps](#). If you are lucky, it is even possible to see the sea of clouds from there at sunset time!




The location of this spot is confusing, because people often say that Ciyun Temple is the sunset spot, and this location on GoogleMaps is even called “Ciyun Temple Scenery”. However, it’s not actually at Ciyun Temple! To find the sunset viewing platform, you’ll first need to reach the small **Alishan Museum** (阿里山博物館), which is near Ciyun Temple and is marked on GoogleMaps. From there, a narrow, paved road goes around to the sunset viewing platform.

Please beware that after the sun sets, it gets dark quickly, and you still need to find your way back. One reader reported getting lost on the trail after sunset (even with GoogleMaps), so make sure to get one of the hiking maps from the visitor’s center and/or familiarize yourself with the trail before sunset.

Alternatively, use an app such as the paid version of AllTrails, which will allow you to see your exact location and all the trails (much better than GoogleMaps), and as long as you download one of the nearby trails before you go there, it will work even without WiFi.





Entrance gate to Ciyun Temple

On the northern side of the circuit is **Sacred Tree (Shenmu) station**, where you can catch the small train back to Alishan Station.

If you're starting your day by watching the sunrise (see next section), then I recommend hiking from Chushan (the sunrise viewpoint) down to Chaoping Station, then follow the walking route I described above. There are two ways to do it, which I will describe below.

^

If you see the sunrise around (for example) 7:00 a.m., you could easily hike down to Chaoping station by 8:00 a.m., and then to Shenmu by 9 or 10 a.m., and back to the tourist village by 10:30 or 11 a.m for hotel check out.

Best Places to See the Sunrise in Alishan

My friends and I at Duigaoyue Sunrise Viewing Platform

The classic viewpoint for the famous Alishan sunrise over a sea of clouds is



the Chushan (Zhushan) Sunrise Observation Platform at **Chushan Station** (Zhushan Station/祝山車站, 2451m), where you can expect a mass of noisy people shivering in the dark for the sunrise.

Chushan Station Update: After being closed for a few years for renovations, Chushan finally reopened in late 2023. The new station is very beautiful ([see pics of it here!](#))

Please note that it is not guaranteed to see a good sunrise at Chushan, or to see anything at all. I've been 4 times in total, and only one was really good. Alishan is famously foggy/misty. Sometimes clouds roll in and cover the viewpoint, you can't see more than 10 meters in front of you.

On a good day, though, you will be looking over a massive valley that fills with a sea of clouds far below you. Across the valley, you can see a wall of mountains, include Yushan, the tallest in Taiwan and Northeast Asia.

To get there, you can ride the Alishan Forest Railway from Alishan Station to the terminal Chushan station, with several departures before sunrise every morning (book your ticket online or at the station the day before (1 to 4:30) or



on the day of sunrise, 30 min before departure). You can also walk there if you know the way (see more on that below).

A whole sunrise viewing platform to ourselves at Duigaoyue

If you want to watch the **sunrise without the crowds**, there are two options near Chushan. The first option is to walk down the car road 10 minutes to **Duigaoyue Sunrise Platform (對高亭)**. This is an old sunrise viewing platform with an equally good view. It also served as a temporary platform



for the masses when Chushan was under renovation. Trains no longer stop at it now that Chushan has reopened.

If you're hiking up to Chushan, you would pass very close to Duigaoyue on the way. After hiking up through the forest from Chaoping Station, the trail meets the car road and you turn left onto the car road. At the point where the railway tracks cross over the road a few minutes later, you would follow the train tracks for a few minutes to the left (north) and you can't miss it. See the next section for more info.

The second option for watching sunrise is **Xiaoliyuanshan Lookout** (小笠原山觀景台). This platform is just 10 minutes uphill on a trail from Chushan. This one is the highest of them all, so the view is great, but it might have a few more people than Duigaoyue.

On the walking trail between the lookout points, you can also enjoy traditional local teas at **Mt. Ali Tea No. 35** (茶田35號), which is open from 4 AM to 1 PM daily. This is an experience I highly recommend after you watch the sunrise! The teahouse also has a shop in the tourist village beside Alishan train station.

Note that **you aren't allowed to drive up to Chushan**. There's no parking, and no vehicles are allowed except the e-bus and train, in order to prevent air pollution in the area.



“Sea of Clouds” (sort of) Alishan sunrise from Duigaoyue Sunrise Platform

How to Hike up to the Sunrise Viewpoint

You don’t have to crowd onto the train with hundreds of other people at 5 am (give or take) to get to the sunrise viewpoint. Many hotels offer a seat in a private car (NT250-300 per person), or you can walk up!

I’ve walked up in the dark, and it’s doable, but I would suggest that you at



least find and maybe even walk up the trail the day before so that you don't get lost the next morning in the dark.

Step one is to walk from your hotel along the car road to the trail head near Chaoping Station. The trail head is called Zhushan Sunrise trail (祝山觀日步道) on GoogleMaps. You'll even pass the 24-hour 7-11 at the start of your walk, if you need coffee or breakfast. Budget 25 minutes to reach the trailhead.

From the trailhead, it's a 20-minute uphill hike through the forest, all stairs. The trail will then connect to Zhushan Forest Rd., the main driving road up to Chushan sunrise viewpoint. As you follow the road up, after just a couple minutes, you'll reach the point where the train tracks cross the road. If you want to go to Duigaoyue Sunrise Platform to watch the sunrise without crowds, turn left, walking along the train tracks for just a few minutes.

If you want to watch the sunrise from Chushan like everyone else, continue a few more minutes up the road. The total walking time from your hotel will be just under an hour. I would recommend a flashlight or headlamp for the dark forest section of the trail. It is quite dark.

Hiking from Sunrise Viewpoint to the Main Trails

^

My friends hiking from Duigaoyue down to Chaoping along the train line

After seeing the sunrise at Chushan, Xiaoliyuanshan, or Duigaoyue, I recommend walking back down, instead of packing onto the train like everyone else.

The most direct way is to take the Zhushan Sunrise Trail, which I just described above, in reverse. Follow the vehicle road down from Chushan. A few minutes after you pass the trail line over the road, and Duigaoyue, watch for the trail entrance into the forest on the right. The downhill trail will end



near Chaoping station, from where you can access the main tourist trail to Shenmu station.

A second option is to physically walk on the train tracks from Duigaoyue all the way down to Chaoping station. As for whether this is technically allowed, I'm not totally sure, but we've done it twice and nobody said anything. Just watch for oncoming trains. You'll hear them, and they don't go very fast.

If you go this way, you won't have to walk all the way back to Chaoping Station. Shortly before reaching it, there will be a side path that can put you directly onto the Sister Ponds trail, quite close to the ponds themselves.

Don't Forget about the Sunset at Alishan!



Sunset at Alishan

With all the Alishan sunrise hype, a lot of people don't realize you can also see gorgeous sunsets from Alishan. One decent spot is from **Ciyun Temple** near Shenmu station, with views of Datashan, the highest peak in Alishan. The sunset platform there is blocked by trees, but you walk walk higher up to the small cemetery beside the temple for a view of the sunset. You might even see a sea of clouds!

A more convenient option is from the 2nd or 3rd floors of the **Alishan Train Station**, or from the highway around the **Entrance Gate to Alishan** (marked 阿里山國家森林遊樂區入口售票亭 on GoogleMaps), just 5 minutes' walk from the tourist village, where I shot the above photo at sunset!



If you're willing to walk further for an even better spot, you get exit Alishan National Forest Recreation Area (bring your ticket for re-entry!) and walk 25 minutes to this **sunset viewing spot on the highway** [here](#).

Yet another place you can see the sunset is **Xiaoliyushan Lookout** (小笠原山觀景台), one of the sunrise spots I described above. This is just a 5-10 minute walk from Chushan (Zhushan), the famous sunrise viewing spot. But Xiaoliyushan is actually higher than Chushan, so you can see both the sunrise and sunset from there.

And don't worry about the dark – after sunset, you can just follow the car road (and/or Zhushan Sunrise Trail) to get back to Alishan tourist village. You could also stick around longer at Xiaoliyushan Lookout for stargazing (see next section).

Stargazing in Alishan



Stargazing at Xiaoliyushan (image by Vinson Siau, used with permission)

There is now a stargazing tour offered evening night at Alishan. The tour starts at the Alishan e-shuttle bus stop beside Alishan Visitor Center (阿里山旅客服務中心) in the main parking lot at Alishan tourist village. The guide only speaks Mandarin, but that shouldn't stop you from going.

You can buy your ticket (TWD 300 per person) from 5:30 to 7 PM. They will



take you to Chushan (the famous sunrise viewing spot) in the Alishan e-bus. From there, you will walk (10 min) up to Xiaoliyushan Lookout (小笠原山觀景台) for seeing the stars. You can't see as many on nights with a bright moon.

If you want to go stargazing by yourself, simply follow the directions I gave above for walking to Chushan in the dark. If you're driving, note that the Alishan National Scenic Area entrance gate is open 24 hours. You'll still need to pay the park entrance fee, no matter what time you arrive.

However, you can't drive up to Chushan or Xiaoliyushan. In an effort to prevent air pollution, they only allow the train or e-bus to go up there. So you'll still need to park in the main tourist village parking lot and walk up or take the stargazing tour.

Other Hiking Trails in Alishan



Looking up is mesmerizing

It is relatively easy to escape the tourist crowds at Alishan. Besides the main tourist walking trail between Chaoping and Shenmu station, the following Alishan hiking trails are all within the Alishan National Scenic Area and can be accessed on foot from the tourist village.



Duigaoyue Trail (對高岳步道)

Duigaoyue Platform (which I described above as an alternative sunrise viewpoint) sits at the start of a two-hour return hike to Duigao Pavilion (2444m). This relatively easy trail follows the train tracks for some time, offering views similar to what can be seen from the sunrise viewpoints.

Learn more about this hike in [this Mandarin blog](#) and [this one](#) (use GoogleTranslate if necessary).

Mianyue Line Trail (眠月線)



Spooky Mian Yue line requires a permit to enter

Mian Yue Line is a thrilling and mystical trail along an abandoned high mountain railway line. The trail includes an impressive 21 bridge crossings and 14 train tunnels.

[Permits](#) are needed for this trail and great care must be taken. Demand is high for the trail, so there's a lottery system for applicants. The trail branches



off from Duigaoyue trail (see above), or you can hike there by following the train like up from Sister Ponds Trail.

[Parkbus Taiwan](#) sometimes does trips to Mian Yue Line. They arrange the permits and other logistics. If you take a trip with them, you can use the code Spiritual10 to get a 10% discount.

Tashan Trail (Mount Daito/塔山步道)

Some very motivated individuals hike up this difficult, 4-hour return trail for sunrise. The platform (2663m) at the end offers epic views of Tashan (Dashan/塔山, the highest peak in the Alishan massif) and Yushan/Jade Mountain (the highest peak in Taiwan).

The trail begins at the Sister Ponds, follows the track train tracks going up, then veers north. There's an [AllTrails entry for the hike here](#).

Shuishan Trail (水山步道)

This easier 1 to 1.5 hour-return walk follows a railway line that once lead to Dongpu and is no longer used. The trail crosses over a wooden train bridge, and ends at enormous 2700-year-old Shuishan Giant Tree.



You can find the trail by looking for the spot where the old train line splits off from the Alishan to Zhaoping line a little south of Zhaoping. The trail head is marked 水山線步道 on GoogleMaps, and there's an [AllTrail entry for it here](#).

Pro tip: If you really want to get off-the-beaten-track in the greater Alishan region, try the [Alishan Northwest Corridor](#), a tourist-free region featuring more gorgeous tea farms, bamboo forests, hiking trails, and waterfalls. There are very few buses providing access to the area, so having your own transportation is ideal.

Where to Stay in Alishan



The hotel strip at the back of Alishan tourist village

Most of Alishan's hotels are found on a curving road behind the tourist village parking lot. Most of these hotels are equally old and overpriced. Due to high demand and limited rooms, they often sell out.

In my opinion, the pick of the bunch right now is **Shermuh Hotel** ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#) / [read reviews](#)). They recently renovated so it looks newer



inside, and they even offer pick-up from the bus station if you ask. This will save you a 15-minute walk with your luggage.

Last time we went to Alishan, we chose **Mei Li Ya** ([see on Booking](#)) simply because it was the cheapest. It was as low quality as we expected, but on the plus side, they had electric heated blankets (would be nice in winter) and the guy at the desk was extremely helpful. He even lent us umbrellas and some sweaters for my kids because we had come totally unprepared.

Other options on the same road are **Wankou Hotel** ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)) and **Cing Shan Hotel** ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)).

Besides the above options in Alishan tourist village, there are two more hotels deeper inside the park near Chaoping train station and the main hiking trails. These are **Alishan Gou Hotel** ([see on Klook](#) / [Agoda](#) / [Tripadvisor](#)) and **Alishan Hotel (Alishan House)** ([see on Booking](#) / [Agoda](#) / [TripAdvisor](#)).

These two hotels have more beautiful natural surroundings and a great location but are further from 7-11 and the amenities in the tourist village. They both offer pickup from the bus station and serve food. I feel that Gou Hotel is the better of the two (it's a little old but has nice views from the rooms), while Alishan House is preferred by large tour groups.



Where to Eat in Alishan

Most restaurants are found around the parking lot in the tourist village. Here you can find hot pot and several places serving fairly similar meals. The pick of the bunch seems to be **999 Restaurant (九九九餐廳)** on the second floor, and nearly identical **Xin Xingguang (新星光餐廳)** next door.

Their large soups, mountain greens, noodles, and other local-style dishes are perfect after a long chilly day. I personally loved the cold tofu slices with delicious local wasabi and soy sauce. Fresh Alishan's wasabi is more flavorful and less sinus-burning than wasabi you might be used to from typical sushi shops.

For vegetarians, you'll find the below two dishes in restaurants there, plus a few other vegetable and tofu dishes, but not a whole lot. Find out [how to ask for vegetarian foods in Taiwan here](#).



Spicy bamboo shoots and cold tofu with local Alishan wasabi



This is where wasabi comes from! You can buy real local wasabi from every shop and stall in Alishan

A new addition is the covered arcade of local food stalls across the parking lot (search for 娜若瑪菲美食街 on GoogleMaps). Come here for cheap, [local Taiwanese dishes](#)—best if you’re on a budget or traveling alone.

Many of the hotels give breakfast vouchers for local style buffet breakfasts served from very basic little restaurants in the tourist village. We were



confused to find that our breakfast was served in a different restaurant on each day.

You can buy tea leaves in many shops in the tourist village, but one shop that stood out was **Mt. Ali tea #35 (茶田35號)**, with creative package designs that break away from the usual Alishan trains and sunrises motifs. You can usually taste tea brewed on the spot before buying. This teashop also operates a small tea house on the trail between Chushan (the famous sunrise lookout point) and Xiaoliyuanshan. To more about local teas, read my [guide to Alishan high mountain tea](#).

Alishan coffee is also grown on Alishan and sold in many of the shops, but I haven't tried it. Let me know if you have, and what you thought!

When to Visit Alishan



Sometimes it snows at Alishan, but don't count on it! (This is a photo of a photo I saw hanging in a restaurant in Alishan)

As I mentioned above, Alishan is usually about 10 degrees colder than lower altitudes in Taiwan (see [Alishan's average monthly temperatures](#)). Therefore, in [summer in Taiwan](#) Alishan can be pleasantly warm but chilly at night, so you still need to bring proper clothing, especially for sunrise viewing.

^

Summer is also one of the most popular times, so it can be busiest and hotel

prices are usually higher. Don't travel to Alishan during (or shortly after) a typhoon or heavy rain, when landslides are common. And cherry blossoms season is probably the busiest time of year at Alishan, so good luck getting a hotel at that time! (see the Alishan cherry blossoms section at the top of the article for more info).


Like everywhere else in Taiwan, fall and spring are probably the best time to visit, but can get quite chilly at Alishan.

If you visit Alishan in [winter in Taiwan](#), especially [December](#), [January](#), and [February](#), you have the highest chance of seeing the “sea of clouds” phenomenon at sunrise, but it can be freezing, especially when you are standing and waiting for sunrise. I quite enjoyed my winter visit but I personally love cold weather.

There was no snow when I visited, but I saw some frost on the Alishan forest railway tracks in the early morning.

See more information about the weather and what to wear in each season in my guide to the [best time to visit Taiwan](#).





Frost on the Alishan railway tracks in winter

Thank you if you read this far, and I hope you found everything here that you needed to know for visiting Alishan! I love answering your questions here or in my free [Taiwan Travel Planning group](#), so please let me know below if I've missed anything or you found that any information was out of date. Enjoy your trip to Alishan!



Related Posts

[Alishan High Mountain Tea: The Champagne of Taiwan Oolongs](#)

[Our Visit to Rainbow Village Taichung \(before it was destroyed\)](#)

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104 thoughts on “Alishan, Taiwan: A Super Detailed 2024 Guide”

Gina Panozzo

March 18, 2019 at 1:45 pm

After seeing the delicious food you ate in Alishan, it seriously made me miss Taiwan. Imho, Taiwanese food is effing amazing and I'm not ashamed to admit that I went 3 times... Just to eat everything. I would love to get away to Alishan so I can get away from the heat. The scenery honestly looks like something from a movie.

[Reply](#)

Corinna Foong

March 18, 2019 at 1:45 pm

Hi Nick,



I'm planning a trip to Taipei with my family and was thinking of going to Alishan when I found your blog. Do you think it would be possible for us to travel on the bus to Alishan with a folded wheel chair?

[Reply](#)

Nick Kembel

[March 18, 2019 at 1:45 pm](#)



Hi Corinna,

If you see my Alishan transportation guide (there are multiple links to it in this article), you will see that there are some Chiayi to Alishan buses that are even wheelchair accessible. For the others, I can't say 100% for sure, but since there should be storage space for people's luggage under the bus, then I would imagine they must be able to put a folded wheelchair as well. If you want to find out for sure, you can always call Taiwan's 24-hour free tourist information hotline at 0800-011-765 and they should be able to find out for you!

[Reply](#)

cgl

[March 18, 2019 at 1:45 pm](#)

Hi Nick,

Great info! With this, I'm planning to go to Alishan on January. We plan on staying in Tainan as it is much cheaper. Do you think it's



going to snow around January 24-26?

Also, here's how we'd think our itinerary will be. Let me know what you think! 😊

Day trip to Alishan

Tainan – Chiayi via TRA

Alishan Forrest Train at 9AM (will try to book in advance)

Get off at Fenchihu (explore around)

Take the straight bus from Fenchihu – Alishan

Alishan – Chiayi direct bus

Thanks so much!

[Reply](#)

riza

[February 7, 2019 at 3:40 pm](#)

Hi Nick! Going to Alishan with my friends and we're a group of 4 on



March 11. We'll be coming from Taipei and will be in Alishan by 2pm. We plan to walk since I think it's cherry blossoms season two two sisters pond, shouzhen temple then to ciyun temple to catch the sunset there. However, i've seen in some blogs that the more probable choice for sunset is near Alishan Museum. Do you happen to know where that is? Also, is it better to go there?

Another thing, since we are going to catch the sunset, and I've seen that no more Alishan trains run around 6pm, how to we get back to Chiayi for Chiayi to Taipei HSR?

Thanks so much and your blog was the best I've seen – and mind you – i've been researching about this for days!!!

[Reply](#)

Nick Kembel

[February 7, 2019 at 3:59 pm](#)

Hi Riza, thanks for reading!

I don't thinking I've been to Alishan Museum, but I checked



on Google maps and it seems to be almost right beside Ciyun Temple, so it seems like that general area is a good place to catch the sunset!

There is no train from Chiayi to Alishan. Well, there is, but it only goes half way, from Chiayi to Fenqihu. After Fenqihu, you must take a bus for one hour to the top. Going back to the Chiayi HSR, the only option is to take the bus. The bus departure times from Alishan to Chiayi HSR are 10:10, 13:30, 14:40, 16:40. The last bus from Alishan to Chiayi TRA train station is only a little later (17:10), but then you need to travel from TRA to HSR station out of town, so it's not really helpful. Basically, it's not possible to see the sunset and also get back to Chiayi after, unless you book a private vehicle.

I hope that helps, and let me know if you have more questions!

[Reply](#)

Eddy

[February 17, 2019 at 3:18 pm](#)



Hi Nick, I will be staying at Chiayi for a night on 4 March. Is it possible for us to go for sunset or sunrise and where would be the best spot? Or could you suggest us an itenary, been searching but still confused. Read your blog, you're someone with a kind heart for sharing...

[Reply](#)

Nick Kembel

[February 17, 2019 at 7:57 pm](#)



Hi Eddy,
If you are staying in Chiayi City for only one night, then there is not really anywhere nearby that is famous for sunsets or sunrises. Alishan is famous for this, but you must travel about 2-3 hours to reach Alishan, and there is no transportation after sunset. If you have more time, you could consider going up to Alishan!

[Reply](#)

Denis

[March 31, 2019 at 5:50 pm](#)



FYI, your “secret sunrise spot” is currently closed by maintenance. There’s a two meter high metal wall currently. I stumbled there when hiking to the sunset platform in the afternoon.

[Reply](#)

Nick

[March 31, 2019 at 6:53 pm](#)

Thanks for letting me know, Denis! I will update the article immediately.

[Reply](#)

Sophia

[April 23, 2019 at 5:57 pm](#)

Nick, I am a volunteer at the Mountain Ali Tea No. 35. I want to thank



you for mentioning us in your article. We have so many different countries visit and they are happy with our teas. Thank you!

[Reply](#)

Nick

[April 23, 2019 at 8:09 pm](#)

Hi Sophia, it's my pleasure! I was happy to see this interesting store. It's a good addition to the usual ones at Alishan.

[Reply](#)

Philip

[May 3, 2019 at 5:02 pm](#)

Hello Nick Kembel! Thank you for this excellent blog post. Not only is the tea excellent quality, but the people working here are very



helpful and friendly. There is a volunteer working here who wants me to thank you for her. If anyone comes to get tea from here, they'll be lucky if they can meet Yoshie Iijima working at the store.

[Reply](#)

Nick

[May 3, 2019 at 10:47 pm](#)

Hi Philip,

Thanks for your comments! Are you talking about Mt. Ali tea #35? That's great to hear they said thank you. I'll need to stop in again and say hi to them next time I'm in Alishan! Enjoy your trip 😊

[Reply](#)

Vik

[May 18, 2019 at 1:35 pm](#)



Hi there, I love your post, so informative! Would you be able to share more details on how to hike up Alishan to see the sunrise? I have tried to look for more details on Alishan sunrise hike but the search results always bring me back to “take the train” haha. Would love to hike instead if possible!

[Reply](#)

Nick

[May 20, 2019 at 3:49 pm](#)

Hi Vik,
Did you see this part of my article:
“I’ve walked up in the dark, and it’s doable, but I would suggest that you at least find and maybe even walk up the trail the day before so that you don’t get lost the next morning. First, walk to Zhaoping Station and locate the Zhushan footpath just south of the station. This 20-minute uphill stretch through the forest connects to the Zhushan Forest Rd., which then leads all the way up to Duigaoyue sunrise platform, or Zhushan. In total it takes less than an



hour. A flashlight or headlamp is recommended.”

[Reply](#)

Sarah

[June 8, 2019 at 11:56 am](#)

Hi Nick! Amazing posts about Taiwan with children. We are coming in three weeks time and love the sound of Alishan. We want to stay two nights there on 30th June and 1st July... I can’t seem to find any accommodation in that area – can you please help me? Am I looking in the wrong area? Could I email you a few questions?

[Reply](#)

Nick

[June 8, 2019 at 8:16 pm](#)

Hi Sarah, thanks for your comment, and sure, please email



me at nickkembel@gmail.com

I may need a day or two to reply because I'm on the last night of a little trip to Korea right now!

[Reply](#)

Martha

[July 11, 2019 at 11:02 pm](#)



Hi Nick,

Planning a trip to Taiwan in December and have discovered your articles – amazing, so eye opening and informative!

I'm just wondering how far in advance it is possible to book a night in a hotel in Alishan? I'm not traveling there until December as I say, and for the hotels listed here when I try to book them for my dates it says "sold out", which I'm assuming means they aren't available to book that far in advance yet as earlier dates are available.

Many thanks!

Martha

[Reply](#)

Nick

[July 12, 2019 at 8:48 am](#)

Hi Martha,

Thanks for reading! I can't imagine they would sell out so far in advance, especially for December, which is low season



there. I don't know that they have a time period for booking specifically at Alishan, but I've noticed that many hotels in other places typically don't do more than around 6 months in advance. Have you tried experimenting with earlier dates? You may be able to figure out how far in advance you can book by doing that. Best of luck!

[Reply](#)

Ryan

[August 11, 2019 at 7:34 am](#)

Planning a trip for January 2020 with my best gal pal and chanced upon your most lovely site... thank you SO MUCH for having added to the beauty of this world by sharing your knowledge and passion! The world needs more people like you who care and share! Hugs, stay safe and bon voyage!!

[Reply](#)



Nick

August 13, 2019 at 11:48 am

Ryan, thank you so much for your comment, and I'm really glad that you found some useful information and inspiration on my site. Happy travels!

[Reply](#)

Wendy Inglis Humphrey

October 15, 2019 at 6:25 pm



Hi Nick, thanks for the detailed information about Alishan and Fenchihu. It was invaluable for planning our trip from the UK. My husband enjoys a good cup of coffee and decided to treat himself to a cup of Alishan Champion coffee today in Fenchihu. He said was very mellow and smooth. Not cheap at 200NTD but very enjoyable!

[Reply](#)

Nick

[October 17, 2019 at 5:34 am](#)

Thanks Wendy, that's great to hear! 200 is indeed a little steep, but at least it was good 😊

[Reply](#)

Rei

[October 19, 2019 at 5:02 pm](#)



Hi Nick,

Thank you for this guide. Very informative and helpful. I have been searching the Internet for a good information about Alishan since I will be traveling there on November. Your guide help me a lot and now I am more excited for my trip.

[Reply](#)

Nick

[October 20, 2019 at 2:36 am](#)

Thanks for reading, and enjoy your trip!

[Reply](#)

David

[October 29, 2019 at 12:49 pm](#)



Hi Nick, Love your blog about Alishan. We are thinking about staying in Chingyi and want to hike the Ruitai Historic Trail. You have mentioned that we can take bus 7315, departing from Chiayi station at 9:20am to Ruili. We cannot read Chinese. If we ask the bus driver to drop us off at the Ruitai historic trail, would the driver understand where we want to go? Are the trail head and trail well marked and easy to find? Is there return bus from Taihe to Chingyi train or bus station?

Thanks for your kind attention.

[Reply](#)

Nick

[October 29, 2019 at 4:09 pm](#)

Hi David, and thanks a lot!

When you say “Chingyi” you mean Chiayi right?

I think the bus driver may not understand what you want, because the Chinese language is very specific; if you pronounce Ruili a little wrong, they won’t even understand. I think it’s best to show him the Chinese words of Ruili Ruitai



Historic Trail entrance, which is 瑞里瑞太古道的路口. Then the bus will drop you off right at the entrance to the hike (because the village of Ruili is actually spread out along the road, with several stops). The entrance is clearly a trail entrance, but I don't remember if it had English. It will be on the right side of the road (same side you get off the bus). I've hiked the trail twice before. Many years ago, I actually got a little lost because it wasn't so well marked. A few years ago I went again with friends, and we had no such problem. The trail will actually have a choice toward the end to go to Taihe or Fenqihu. I would suggest going to Fenqihu, which has the Alishan train to Chiayi, and more bus connections back to Chiayi as well. It's a more interesting town to take a look as well. You can see all the bus and train times for Fenqihu to Chiayi in my guide "How to get to Alishan". I hope this helps!

[Reply](#)**gounuren**[December 8, 2019 at 4:22 pm](#)

Hi Nick! Do you have any details on the Yuyupas Tsou Cultural Village? Would it be possible to go here from Alishan Lauya Homestay via Line A or B? Thanks!

[Reply](#)

Nick

[December 9, 2019 at 12:20 am](#)



Hi there! After checking some blogs online, it seems like from your hotel, you can walk 25 minutes (or take any bus going downhill) to Shizhuo (石卓) station. From there, you can call Yuyupas Tsou Cultural Village (05-2562788) and they will come pick you up. According to GoogleMaps, you could even walk the whole way from your hotel to Yuyupas Tsou Cultural Village in 50 minutes. Since your hotel is not too far from Shizhuo, maybe they could even pick you up from your hotel if you ask them. I would suggest you ask your hotel to help you to call them after you check in. Hope this helps!

[Reply](#)

Alex

[December 26, 2019 at 12:22 pm](#)

Hey there Nick, thanks for a good read!

We're thinking about getting to both Alishan national scenic area and the Ruitai old trail in the same excursion from Chiyai, spending



one or two nights somewhere on the way. Do you know if there are any connections between the two, or how one would achieve this in the optimal way. We do have our luggage with us, so it would be necessary to find somewhere to drop it off before exploring Alishan and Ruitai respectively.

Thanks for all help!

[Reply](#)

Nick

[December 26, 2019 at 1:38 pm](#)

Hey Alex,

For the Ruitai trail, the Ruili end of it is quite remote with few transportation connections and hotels. Therefore, it would make much more sense to go from the Taihe side and stay in Fenqihu. Fenqihu is on the train line, has frequent bus connections in either direction (to Alishan or to Chiayi), and more accommodation choices. So I would suggest from Chiayi you take the train or bus to Fenqihu, do your hike, then continue on the Alishan the next day. The only



downside is that the Ruitai is a fairly long trail; I've only ever done it one way, and it was quite a walk (4-5 hours if memory serves me), so if you had it do it as a return walk, I'm not sure you'd be able to cover the entire thing there and back in one day. Not the end of the world, but something to consider. Hope this helps!

[Reply](#)

Ryan

[February 3, 2020 at 2:59 am](#)

This is some great stuff Nick. You have become our authority on all things Taiwan. We can't find many travel bloggers who have good info on Taiwan.

[Reply](#)

Nick

[February 3, 2020 at 9:32 am](#)



Thanks Ryan! My annoyance with the lack of available info while traveling around Taiwan is one of the reasons I started this site 😊

[Reply](#)

rob

February 21, 2020 at 2:47 am

Hi Nick! Thanks for all the great info, its been a huge help in my exploration of Taiwan so far. I just did Alishan today and loved it, and was able to grab a better map that they gave us at the gate. I took a quick photo of it to share with you (its a bit wrinkled from my pocket, but might help people get their bearings). Adding my email below, send me a note so I can reply with it if you like!

[Reply](#)



Nick

February 21, 2020 at 3:16 pm

Thanks a lot Rob!

[Reply](#)

Ram

June 9, 2020 at 8:23 pm

Dear Nick,

I just read your blog on A visit to Alishan and it's truly mesmerizing though. We are planning to visit Alishan this weekend and intend to follow your blog. Good luck on your future write-ups.

[Reply](#)



Nick

June 10, 2020 at 8:22 am

Thanks Ram! Enjoy your trip, and let me know if you have any questions!

[Reply](#)

Tomas

July 30, 2020 at 7:59 am



Hello! This guide is just amazing. It's by far the best available in internet. Thanks for taking your time to write it. There is, however, a small change I think you need to make: if you are staying in SunSweet Hotel and taking bus 7322, you must get off at 隙頂 (Xiding) and walk 15min. This is the information I was able to gather from the bus route and from the hotel owner.

Anyways, great article!

[Reply](#)

Nick

[July 30, 2020 at 11:05 pm](#)

Thank you so much for the kind feedback, Tomas, and the useful information. I'll update that bus info in my article as soon as I get a chance!

[Reply](#)



Grace

August 6, 2020 at 3:40 am

Thank you for this incredibly helpful guide. My boyfriend and I are heading to Alishan next week. The hotels in the recreation area were sold out so we're spending all four nights in Fenqihu. Our plan is to spend a day or two hiking the Ruili trail and seeing the tea plantations nearby and then going up to Alishan for the other two days. It appears that there is a bus from Fenqihu to Alishan recreation area at 11:30 am (which you have listed). However, the last bus that returns to Fenqihu from Alishan is at 2:30 pm, which is too early if we arrive at the recreation area around 12:30. I was wondering if have an idea of how difficult it would be for us to get a taxi in Alishan. Were there taxis around the visitors center area? Or do you think we would need to pre-book a taxi or private car to take us back to Fenqihu?

[Reply](#)

Nick

August 6, 2020 at 11:03 am



Hi Grace, your plan sounds great, even though you didn't manage to get a room at Alishan. If you take a look at this page, you will find that there's actually one more bus from Alishan to Fenqihu at 17:00 (it is marked "Fenqihu only):

http://www.nickkembel.com/how-to-get-to-alishan/#Getting_from_Chiayi_to_Alishan

But please confirm the bus time when you go, because these things can change. As for taxis, I've never noticed any taxis hanging out around Alishan, although I've never really looked for them, either. You might be able to find one, but I wouldn't count on it. However, your hotel in Fenqihu may be able to arrange a driver for you if you need it. Once, I missed the last bus from Fenqihu to Chiayi, and the hotel in Fenqihu was able to find a driver for me.

[Reply](#)

Grace

[August 7, 2020 at 9:59 pm](#)



Awesome. Thank you!

[Reply](#)

Katherine

February 23, 2021 at 12:56 am

Hi, we have just visited Alishan and both the Tashan and Shuishan trails are closed at the moment. 😞

[Reply](#)

Nick

February 28, 2021 at 12:06 pm



Thank you for the update!

[Reply](#)

rosmine

[June 13, 2022 at 5:12 am](#)

Hi thanks for the super detailed guide for Alishan. Because I'm on a budget, I want to take the night bus to Alishan so I can hike and see the sunrise. It only departs on Friday, have you done this before? My other question is which trails are open now to see the sunrise?

[Reply](#)

Nick

[July 6, 2022 at 11:17 pm](#)

Yes, I took the night bus once years ago. At that time, there



were more of them. I think there were two per night, and on more days than just Friday. I remember mine arrived a good couple hours before sunrise, so I had a little time to kill when I first arrived. At least 7-11 was open. Then I spent about an hour walking up to the viewpoint. If it's your first time, that extra time could come in handy in case you have trouble finding the trail head. As far as I know, all the trails I describe in this article are presently open. Worst case scenario, even if the trail up to the viewpoint were closed, you can still take the train up, or walk up the vehicle road. Also keep in mind that it can be cold up there, even in summer. Hope this helps!

[Reply](#)

Vince

[November 20, 2022 at 9:13 pm](#)

Hi Nick! Awesome site! Do you recommend any other companies that offer day trips to Alishan / Fenqihu bamboo forest trail from Taichung or Chiayi? I'm a solo traveler, so it's hard to find companies



that offer groups to join, and a private driver would probably be too expensive. I think Klook only shows one day-tour to Alishan only from Taichung. with no available times in February. I'm considering a tour company because I'm worried of getting stranded somewhere from lack of frequency of buses / trains if I attempt going alone. Is it too ambitious to check out the Alishan / Fenqihu bamboo forest trail in one day, departing and returning to Taichung or Chiayi? Thanks for the tips!

[Reply](#)

Nick

[November 23, 2022 at 9:43 pm](#)

The bamboo hike that I mention in the article is really quite off the beaten track. I should probably edit the article to mention this. It is quite difficult to reach, and there are no tours that go there. Fenqihu is more accessible, as you can take the train or bus there, and from Fenqihu, there are so hiking trails close to the town where you can also see some bamboo forests. If traveling solo, I would recommend doing that. The deal on Klook called "Discover Alishan", which



includes Fenqihu stop too, also currently seems to have the option for pick up in Kaohsiung or Chiayi, if that's better for you. Besides Klook, you can also try KKday, which seems to have more Alishan tour options than Klook does right now. Just copy paste this link: <https://www.kkday.com/en/product/productlist?page=1&keyword=alishan&q=alishan>

A day trip to Fenqihu and Alishan on your own is still feasible if you get an early start. Just bus directly up to Alishan. Then ride the shuttle bus or train to Chaoping station. Then hike from Chaoping to Shenmu station (this is the most common, popular hiking route, with most beautiful forest scenery). This only takes 1-2 hours. Then shuttle bus from Shouzhen temple or train from Shenmu back to Alishan station. Bus to Fenqihu (see the bus times in my "getting to Alishan" article, I recently updated it). Then spend 1-2 hours in Fenqihu, including a short hike to see the bamboo forests around town. And finally, catch the bus or Alishan Forest Railway from Fenqihu back to Alishan (times also in my other article).

[Reply](#)



Adam

November 23, 2022 at 6:08 pm

Hi Nick,

Thanks for the detailed post! Just one more questions. How often do the busses run between Fenqihu and Alishan, as well as in between Fenqihu and Chiayi?

[Reply](#)



Nick

November 25, 2022 at 11:41 am

Please see my other article “(2023) How to Get to Alishan from Taipei, Chiayi, Sun Moon Lake”. It has all the bus and train times for both directions

[Reply](#)**Jack**

November 28, 2022 at 9:09 pm

Hi Nick,

Thanks for the amazing detailed post!

Is Xiaoliyuanshan Lookout accessible by car? Is it possible to stay in Shizhuo and drive to Xiaoliyuanshan Lookout for sunrise?

Are cars allowed to stay in Alishan till sunset?

Is the photo you took from the highway around the entrance gate to



Alishan “阿里山國家森林遊樂區入口售票亭” on google map?
Thank you!

[Reply](#)

Nick

[November 29, 2022 at 12:28 pm](#)

You're welcome! You cannot drive to Chushan. There is a road to go up there, but only the electric shuttle bus and train is allowed, to preserve the clean air up there, and because there is no parking space up there. You can only park in the main parking lot of Alishan tourist village or at your hotel. From there, you have to walk or take the train up. Alishan gate and tourist village is open 24 hours. For a car, you'll just have to pay the daily fee.

Yes, the photo I took was from a lookout pavilion on the highway, perhaps just a 1-2 minute walk from 阿里山國家森林遊樂區入口售票亭 (the Alishan entrance gate). I used a telephoto lens to take that mountain shot, so the mountains in the shot are a little far away.



[Reply](#)

Lucy How

November 29, 2022 at 3:55 am

Thank you for your very informative blog postings and promp
Facebook Taiwan Travel Planning posts and replies to our queries.

[Reply](#)

Cyndy

January 9, 2023 at 9:35 pm



Thank you for the epic post! Am planning a trip to Taiwan our kids (ages 5 and 7) this summer and this was incredibly helpful. Would you recommend 2 days in Alishan itself for kids that age? I don't want to be rushed...but also don't want the kids to be bored/whining. Am definitely planning on taking the train to Fenqihu!

[Reply](#)

Nick

[January 10, 2023 at 10:07 am](#)

When I took my kids, we spent night 1 on a tea farm in Shizhuo (they picked us up from Fenqihu train station), and night 2 in Alishan, and that was enough for us. Shizhuo was very quiet and we just did some walks through the tea farms around our hotel. Being in Shizhuo meant we could get to Alishan fairly early the next day, and have the better part of the day for doing the main walking trail there and riding the small trains. We didn't do the sunrise (I felt getting up that early just wouldn't be fun for the kids, plus it can be quite cold at the viewpoint). But we were up early enough to do a



little more exploring with the kids in the morning before checking out. If you only made a brief stop in Fenqihu on the way, you'd have a later start at Alishan. You might only have a few hours to explore before sunset, and then a few more hours the next morning before checkout. You could go either way here...Adding a second night at Alishan would surely make it more rushed. But you may find that on that full day at Alishan, you'll run out of things to do. There really isn't much to do there besides hiking, but kids can only hike so far. The hotels there aren't great, so they aren't the best places to just hang out, either.

[Reply](#)

Jay

[January 30, 2023 at 11:13 pm](#)

Hi Nick,

Thank you for this great guide! I'm looking to stay in the Shizhuo area in mid-March to visit Alishan, since it's the middle of cherry blossom season and it's quite difficult to book something within



Alishan proper! I'd like to see the sunrise from Zhushan and it seems like my two options are either to rent a car and drive up or hire a driver with a service like Tripool.

Renting a car would give me the most flexibility but I am concerned that parking at the Alishan train station for the sunrise journey is going to be difficult since it's peak season. It also seems like many of the attractions like the Shizhuo trails and Fenqihu are in walking distance or accessible by bus, so the value of having a car is questionable. Do you have a recommendation one way or another for renting a car versus hiring a driver for the sunrise and relying on the bus system for everything else?

Thanks in advance!

[Reply](#)

Nick

[February 7, 2023 at 9:41 am](#)

I don't have a perfect solution, but here are some things to consider. If you drive, you won't be able to drive up to the



sunrise viewpoint. So you'll still need to park your car at Alishan train station, as you said, and either walk or take the Alishan train up there. However, the parking lot up there is huge and should be able to accommodate all the cars, even in peak season. So it's still a not bad option. In Shizhuo, some hotels are easily accessible by public transport because they are right along the highway, but some are not, like the one I stayed at, because they are located on tea farms up on the mountain side above town. So having a car would be useful for certain hotels. One more thing: to see if getting a ride/driver is even a viable option, you need to inquire if it's even possible. To get a ride for the sunrise only the driver would likely have to drive from the city (Chiayi) all the way up there to pick you up super early. Also, these drivers are point-to-point, so they won't sit around and wait for you. So if they even have a driver willing to make this kind of trip, it might be quite pricey, due to the additional driving time to get to you and to get back to their city after. Some travelers even have trouble just finding a normal driver for the daytime for Chiayi/Alishan area. Finally, two more options you could consider: instead of Zhushan sunrise, you could watch the sunrise from a less popular place, like Eryanping, which is also beautiful. There are a few hotels are Eryanping, too, with significantly fewer tourists than Zhushan. Another



option: there is a late night bus (Kuo Kuang company 1835) from Taipei to Alishan, Friday only, departing taipei at 8:45 pm (march to oct) or 9:45 (nov to feb). It takes about 6 hours. I've done this once before. Basically you sleep for a few hours on the bus, arrive at Alishan super early in the early morning, kill a few hours in the convenience store, then walk up to the sunrise point. Then you don't need a hotel!

[Reply](#)

Daniel

[February 6, 2023 at 9:19 am](#)

Hi Nick! Your blog is fantastic and helpful. I will be travelling to Alishan in less than 2 weeks, and wonder if it is a good idea to spend the first night at Fenqihu, then take a bus down to spend the second night at Eryanping, before taking a bus to Alishan. Is the bus ride to Alishan from Eryanping winding? Because you mentioned from another post that the bus ride from Fenihu to Alishan can cause many passengers to puke.



Also, will I be able to explore Shizhuo tea plantations if I don't stay at any of the guesthouse there? Or would you instead recommend Shizhuo > Eryangping > Alishan ?

[Reply](#)

Nick

[February 10, 2023 at 10:48 am](#)

Hey Daniel, all the buses to Alishan will pass by Eryanping and Shizhuo (near Fenqihu) on the way to Alishan. A few buses also make the small detour to Fenqihu on the way. So not matter which way you go, you will still have to experience the winding drive. The worst part is the final hour, from Shizhuo to Alishan. The scenery around Eryanping and Shizhuo are similar. Both have tea farms, some walking trails with views, and some guesthouses. So you only need to choose one or the other. Also, Fenqihu is quite small and there isn't so much to see and do there. Only a few shops and restaurants on the small old street, and some bamboo forests around town if you want to go hiking. I would suggest this. 1. Day 1 take the bus to Eryanping. Do



some exploring, hiking. Day 2, wake up super early for sunrise, then catch a bus onward to Fenqihu. Spend a few hours in Fenqihu, have lunch there, then catch a bus onward to Alishan. Day 3: Sunrise at Alishan and more hiking there. Check out and take the bus from Alishan to Shitzulu, and ride train back to Chiayi.

[Reply](#)

Daniel

[February 10, 2023 at 11:42 pm](#)

Thanks for the reply Nick. I have already booked the hotels you recommended in your blog posts for Taichung and Alishan before this response. As for my trip, I am taking the Forest Railway from Chiayi to Fenqihu and staying a night there, and proceed to Alishan the next day. To avoid the winding drive as much as possible, I am exploring taking the Forest Railway from Fenqihu to Shizilu Station, and then taking bus #7329 or #7329A to Alishan. It's about 15 mins ride according to Google Map. Do you think



this detour can reduce the car sickness issue? Or is the last 15 min ride up Alishan so winding that it doesn't matter?

Also I would like to ask about the The Fenrui Historical Trail (奮瑞古道). According to the link you gave, it's a 7+km trail to Ruelli and Cat & Joe took 5 hours to do it two-way, since there is no transport from Ruelli. Do you know if it is possible to arrange transport (to Ruelli or pick-up from Ruelli) for this trail so that it can be done one-way instead?

[Reply](#)



Nick

February 16, 2023 at 2:00 pm

Hi Daniel, I've replied to your question in the "taiwan travel planning" group on Facebook.

[Reply](#)

Minnie

February 13, 2023 at 9:25 pm



Hi Nick! Thanks for the detailed guide on Alishan. Similarly i am planning a trip to Alishan end of this month. I currently plan to stay 4 nights (1 – Alishan, 1 – Fenqihu, 2 – Shizhuo), is that too long? Is there any sunrise spots at Shizhuo or would staying nearer to Eryanping be better?

[Reply](#)

Nick

[February 16, 2023 at 2:08 pm](#)

4 nights is a little long. Most people spend only spend 1 or 2 for the whole area. Maybe 3 maximum. But if you want to do a lot of hiking and really take it slow, then 4 is fine. Fenqihu is really tiny, like just one street. There isn't much to do there. Most people just stop there for lunch. If you want to do a little hiking in the bamboo forest nearby, then a few hours is good enough. But if you



want to hike longer, and have a quiet night in the village, then spending the night is fine. As for Shizhuo, same thing. It has some beautiful views and hikes, but one night is probably enough. I would suggest maybe you go to Fenqihu first, have lunch and do a little hiking, then spend the night in a hotel in Shizhuo (it's only 10 min away). You can see the sunset from Shizhuo, but I'm not sure about sunrise. Maybe ask the hotel for suggestions. On Day 2, you can do some hiking in Shizhuo in the morning, check out from hotel, then proceed to Alishan in the afternoon. Then spend 2 nights in Alishan. Alishan has more hiking trails and things to see/do, so I feel it's better to spend two nights there. So in total, you could reduce the trip to 3 hours and still see a lot in all these places. The Alishan sunrise is the most famous and easiest to get to. If you want to see the Eryanping one also, you'd have to stay in one of the hotels there. You could do this instead of Shizhuo, because the scenery around Shizhuo and Eryanping is very



similar.

[Reply](#)

Hato Luu

[February 23, 2023 at 7:30 am](#)

Planning going to Taiwan Oct.26 / you have any suggestion or comment where we should go on a week and tour guide take us go .Thank you

[Reply](#)

Nick

[February 24, 2023 at 10:36 am](#)

Please search the term “Taiwan itinerary” on my site and you will find my recommended 1 week itinerary for Taiwan!



[Reply](#)

Jojo

March 13, 2023 at 10:57 pm

Hi Nick! I love how thorough and detail your blog about Alishan. I was planning on driving to Alishan from Kaohsiung and stay in Alishan for 2 nights. I was wondering if we need a police permit to enter Alishan National park?

[Reply](#)

Nick

March 14, 2023 at 2:06 pm

No you don't need a permit, but there's a small entrance fee when you enter the park. It's not a national park, but a "national forest recreation area". There's only a few small hikes inside the area that need permits, but 99% of visitors



don't do these hikes.

[Reply](#)

Michelle

[March 21, 2023 at 9:51 pm](#)

Hi Nick, thanks so much for your blog, I probably read it like 5-10 times while planning an Alishan visit with my boyfriend and mom a couple of weeks ago! We had a smooth time and the cherry blossoms were beautiful.

[Reply](#)

Nick

[March 24, 2023 at 2:32 pm](#)

Glad to hear you had a great trip!



[Reply](#)

Michelle

March 21, 2023 at 9:54 pm

Here's the blog post about it if you're interested <https://wp.me/pesZoH-6N>

[Reply](#)

Tim

March 29, 2023 at 4:24 am

Hello Nick, really love your super detailed Alishan guide! it's really helpful! I do have some question though. Me and my friends are planning to go to Alishan to watch the sunrise. We are planning on a day trip and will not stay overnight the day before nor the after. We are planning to use our friend's car all the way from Taichung to



Alishan. I noticed that it is not possible to take the car all the way up to the lookout point. However, we wish to go to the Xiaoliyuanshan Lookout. So, the only option is to park the car at Alishan Station and take the Zhaoping railway right?

On the other hand, since we will not be staying overnight, we wouldn't be able to buy the train tickets physically the day before. Therefore, we would like to buy the tickets online beforehand. I noticed the link that you had given on the post, but when I tried to buy it, there was no selection of the train and time. My question is, if we were to purchase the tickets online, will we be able to use it to take the train anytime as we please during the day? or if it's not the case, may I ask for your recommendation regarding my situation? Thank you so much!

[Reply](#)

Nick

[April 3, 2023 at 2:27 pm](#)

Yes, your only option will be to ride the Zhushan (not Zhaoping) sunrise train to the viewpoint or hike up there in the dark. Currently Zhushan station is under renovation, so



you can only ride as far as Duigaoyue (hence it is currently called Duigaoyue line). There's a sunrise viewing platform there, or you can walk 10 minutes uphill to Zhushan or another 10 minutes past Zhushan to Xiaoliyuanshan. It is not necessary to buy your tickets in advance for the sunrise train. The seats never sell out, as there are no seat numbers. You can just show up and buy them around 30 min before the departure. The departure time changes every day due to changing sunrise time. To find tomorrow's time, you can download the Alipedia app. It is updated daily at 4:30 PM for the next days train time. Be care driving up to Alishan in the dark, as the road is very winding, and sometimes foggy, which could be dangerous.

[Reply](#)

Simon

[April 3, 2023 at 5:08 pm](#)

Hi Nick, This is a fantastic and highly detailed resource. Well done. I really like the level of detail you go into. My family is doing a two



week road trip in September and we would like to do the Fenrui Historic Trail you mention and as seen in the walkmyworld post where we first discovered it. We are spending one night in Chiayi and have a rental car so thought we might park at Fenqihu and then grab a taxi to Ruili and walk one way back to our car. We do a lot of hiking so no problem there. Do you know if taxis are easy to get in Fenqihu and what taxi companies exist there?

By the way I notice you also spend time in Canada. Did you ever do the Larch Valley Trail at Moraine Lake also summarised on the walkmyworld site which we did last year. That was also amazing? Cheers.

[Reply](#)

Nick

[April 9, 2023 at 9:37 pm](#)

Hey Simon, thanks a lot! It would be very unlikely to find a taxi in Fenqihu. This is a remote, tiny, one-street village up in the mountains. I once missed the last bus from there and had to ask a hotel to call a driver for me, and then wait quite a while for it to come. Your plan would work if you can find



the ride, though. You can try the Tripool website for this. They offer point-to-point trips around Taiwan. I haven't done Larch Valley (yet!) but I've done Pocatererra Ridge (another famous larch hike, in Kananaskis) during larch seasons, and it was fantastic!

[Reply](#)

geggio

[April 10, 2023 at 3:07 am](#)



Hi Nick,

Many thanks for such a great guide, really appreciated.

I am planning to hike YuShan: as I would be arriving from Taipei, I am planning to spend a night in the Alishan area. Which place in Alishan would you say is more convenient in order to reach Tanaka trailhead (i.e., nearest to public transport to Tanaka)?

I guess I would need to get the bus: are there other options?

Thanks

Geggio

[Reply](#)

Nick

[April 12, 2023 at 11:00 am](#)

As far as I know, only bus 6739 from Alishan to Sun Moon Lake is passing by Yushan National Park entrance. Currently it is only going once per day (departing Alishan 1 PM) and the bus is in high demand because lots of travelers are doing that route, so you'll want to line up a little early (I don't think



advance reservation is possible). I'm not aware of any other options besides driving yourself. Any hotel in Alishan tourist area will do, such as Shermuh, Wankou, etc. They are all older, overpriced hotels, so none really stand out. But you need to book early as they frequently sell out due to limited rooms.

[Reply](#)

Kate

[April 22, 2023 at 10:23 pm](#)

Thanks for this super helpful post! I was thinking of taking the earliest bus to Xiping in the morning and hiking Eryanping Trail and exploring the area a bit before getting back on the bus to take a later morning bus to Alishan. Will I have trouble getting back on the 7332 from Xiping? Thanks!

[Reply](#)



Nick[April 25, 2023 at 8:39 pm](#)

Should be no problem! You can use GoogleMaps for the times, but always go to the stop a little early. You can also see how long your bus takes to get to that stop for timing when the later buses will pass by.

[Reply](#)**Kate**[May 9, 2023 at 9:09 pm](#)

Thank you so much! Should I buy one ticket to Alishan and get off or buy two tickets – one to Xiping from Chiayi and one from Chiayi to Alishan?

[Reply](#)

Nick[May 22, 2023 at 10:14 pm](#)

You can just swipe your EasyCard for riding these buses – swipe when you board, and again when you get off. It is possible to buy tickets for these buses from the FamiPort machine in an FamilyMart in Taiwan. However, the machine only sells a ticket from Chiayi all the way to Alishan. It's not possible to pre-purchase a partial ticket. But I've only ever heard of these buses selling out at peak times like long weekends, lunar new year, or especially cherry blossom season, so if you're not traveling during these times, just swiping EasyCard should be fine!

[Reply](#)

Xin[June 16, 2023 at 9:19 am](#)

Hi Nick!

Thanks for sharing such an insightful information! I am planning to take the Alishan Forest Railway and stop by Fenqihu / Shizhuo to explore a few hours before heading to Alishan. As I will be staying a night in Alishan, do you know if there is any places to store my luggage for that few hours ?

Also, would you recommend going to Fenqihu or Shizhuo? Saw that there's a few hiking trails around Shizhuo but for Fenqihu its only a tiny area with nothing much to explore.

[Reply](#)**Nick**[June 16, 2023 at 1:34 pm](#)

Yes, there are luggage lockers at Fenqihu train station. If you are taking the train up, then visiting Fenqihu will be easier because that's where the train stops. The main thing to do there is have lunch on the cute little old street. There is some delicious food including famous bento boxes. There is also a small train museum and a really cool bamboo forest hike starting beside town (all described in this article). Fenqihu is basically a tourist town, but it is cute. Shizhuo is less convenient to visit, but also less touristy. Probably you won't see anyone there. First, you would have to take a bus from Fenqihu to there. It's only 10 minutes, but the buses are not frequent. Shizhuo is also less easy to visit. It's not really a town. It's more like an area. Along the highway, there are just some shops selling tea. To enjoy the hikes there, you will need more time. You will have to walk uphill from the highway just to reach the hike trailheads. Those hikes are through tea farms and they are quite beautiful. You can find them as Mist trail, Trail of Tea, and Sakura Trail on GoogleMaps. If you decide to go there, then after you do the hike, walk back down to the bus stop on the highway. If you only want to visit Shizhuo and not Fenqihu, it's actually more convenient to take the bus there instead of the train. Every bus from Chiayi to Alishan passes by Shizhuo, but only a few



make the small detour to Fenqihu.

[Reply](#)

Jack Pearson

[July 3, 2023 at 2:04 am](#)

> There, you will need to pay the Alishan National Scenic Area entrance fee of TWD 3000 (or 150 per if you show your bus ticket or student ID card),

Ooops, I think you meant 300 not 3000, haha.

[Reply](#)

Nick

[July 4, 2023 at 10:32 pm](#)



Thanks so much, I'll fix it!

[Reply](#)

Tiffany

[July 14, 2023 at 7:35 am](#)

Hi, the entrance fee for Alishan of NTD 300 is good for 1 or 2 days?
Let's say I plan to visit Alishan for a 2-day itinerary. Does that mean I
have to purchase entrance tickets twice? Thank you!

[Reply](#)

Nick

[July 16, 2023 at 9:34 pm](#)

The entrance ticket is valid for one entrance, so after you pay
it, you can stay there as long as you want and you won't have



to pay it again the next day.

[Reply](#)

Franziska

July 21, 2023 at 8:55 am

Hello Nick,

We are planning our Taiwan trip right now. Besides Alishan we also want to go to Sun-Moon-Lake. Now we are not sure which direction is better (especially with the Alishan train). Is it better to go Chiayi-Fenchihu-Alishan-Sun-Moon-Lake-Taichung or the other way around and go down the Mountain by train to Chiayi.

Thank you so much for your help.

Regards Franziska

[Reply](#)



Nick

August 1, 2023 at 8:52 pm

Either one of these works, but the main difference is the bus time between SML and Alishan. If you go SML to Alishan, the bus leaves at 8 AM and gets to Alishan at 11 AM. This is quite an early start from SML. So you need to make sure you have at least one full day for visiting SML before that. From Alishan to SML, the bus leaves Alishan at 1 PM and arrives at SML at 4 PM. This gives you a whole morning at Alishan before you depart, which is great, but gives you no time to actually see SML once you get there, so you should stay a full day, and possibly one more night at SML after.

[Reply](#)

Lee

August 1, 2023 at 8:42 am



Hi Nick! Thank you so much for your awesome blog its been quite helpful! I'm traveling to Taiwan next week but can't seem to find any hotels to stay in Alishan Forest Area. Seems like if I stay at Fengqihu/Shizuo area, to catch the sunrise at Duigaoyue without renting a car would be quite challenging? May I know if I would be missing out much if I catch the sunrise at Eryanping instead of Duigaoyue i.e. could I still see the sea of clouds?

Since I can't get a hotel at Alishan Forest Area should I book 2 nights at Fengqihu area so that I can catch the sunrise at Eryanping before spending one whole day at Alishan and come back to Fengqihu before heading back to Taipei? Or would it be better still to try get a hotel in Alishan area?

Thank you!

[Reply](#)

Nick

[August 1, 2023 at 4:10 pm](#)



It would be very difficult to catch the sunrise at Duigaoyue if you're staying in Fenqihu or Shizhuo. You'd have to find someone willing to drive you to Alishan in the middle of the night, then you'd have to hike or take the train up to the sunrise viewpoint. The sunrise at Eryanping is a very good alternative though. Just heads up that from Shizhuo or Fenqihu, you'd also need to drive there (around 15-20 minutes) then hike up to the viewpoint. The best option would be to stay in one of the couple hotels that are close to the Eryanping Trailhead, like SunSweet, then you can just walk up directly from your hotel.

[Reply](#)

Lee

[August 4, 2023 at 5:53 am](#)

Thanks so much for your quick reply Nick! I'm also looking at taking the Alishan Forest Railway train from Fenqihu back to Chiayi, although it seems the other direction is the popular route, do you know if



the train route towards Chiayi is using the same path
so it should still be as scenic as the morning ride
towards Fenqihu?

[Reply](#)

Nick

[August 6, 2023 at 2:25 pm](#)

Yes, the train ride going down will be the
same way and the same scenery. Personally,
I find that if I ride it in one direction, that's
enough for me, and for the other way, I'll just
take the bus the whole way, which is faster,
cheaper, and don't need to reserve.

[Reply](#)

Bettina

[August 15, 2023 at 7:40 am](#)



Hi Nick, this is super useful! Do you know of any hikes and sunrise / sunset lookouts in Alishan or Fenchihu that would be do-able with a 4-year-old and a 11-month-old either in a stroller or a carrier? So either paved or short?

[Reply](#)

Nick

[August 23, 2023 at 1:47 pm](#)

Fenqihu is a very tiny village kind of surrounded by hills, so there's no sunset or sunrise lookout points there. If you stay in the nearby village of Shizhao, where many tea farms are located, you can enjoy a nice sunset from some of the accommodations, right from their rooftop or balcony. In Alishan, I've mentioned a couple spots in this article where you can easily watch the sunset: from the 2F of Alishan train station or from the viewpoint on the highway next to the park's entrance gate, where you have to buy a park ticket to enter. As for sunrise, I personally didn't consider to wake my kids up at such an early hour, but if you plan to, the easiest



thing would be to take the morning sunrise train to Duigaoyue. The sunrise viewing platform is right outside the station, so very little walking is required.

[Reply](#)

George

[September 24, 2023 at 10:44 pm](#)

Finding conflicting info online—I've heard that pre-purchasing ticket is better for Chiayi bus to Alishan to guarantee a seat (otherwise if it's full, some people have to sit on the walkway) but some say it's first-come first-serve and can be paid with EasyCard. So those with tickets actually get boarded first regardless?

But also it says here ([link](#)) that you can only pre-purchase ticket on the day of travel, so I suppose those who elect to pay with with EasyCard instead of getting the ticket at the 7-Eleven in front of the bus stop do not have guaranteed seats?

But then I see on Klook (<https://www.klook.com/en-US/activity/>



[50411-alishan-round-trip-ticket-alishan-national-forest-recreation-area-ticket/](#)) you can purchase a package deal and it lets you purchase far in advance than the supposed same-day pre-purchasing requirement...

P.S. We will actually be going from Taichung HSR to Chiayi HSR station and then board the first bus from there for Shizhuo to spend the day there. Since Shizhuo only requires 3-4 hours of hiking and there's not much to do there, I'm thinking we can depart at 11:00 or even at the last departure at 13:10 for a 12:25/14:34 arrival respectively. That way we can spend time the morning at either Taichung or Chiayi, neither of which we get a proper visit for (we arrive in the evening at Taichung from Hehuanshan via bus—not sure how that works yet regarding transfer but here's the schedule: <http://www.ntbus.com.tw/cj-m.html>, <http://www.ntbus.com.tw/cjfm.html>). So thinking if there are any recommended stays and attractions/food near Taichung HSR station for that evening and the next morning before heading to Chiayi HSR Station for Shizhuo.

Much appreciated.

[Reply](#)



Nick

September 27, 2023 at 10:31 am

Hi George, so there are a few gaps in my knowledge here, but one thing I can say is that the only time I've ever heard of anyone not getting on the bus to Alishan because they didn't have a ticket was during the cherry blossom season (March to early April), which is the busiest time of the year for Alishan. For the rest of the year, and in my personal experience, it's always possible to get on. I can't confirm the info that you can only buy a ticket on the day of travel. I would wager a guess that this is not true. If you plan to take the bus from Chiayi HSR to Shizhuo or Alishan outside of cherry blossoms season (or Lunar New Year or any other long weekend in Taiwan), I would be VERY surprised if there was such a huge line at the HSR station bus stop that not everyone could get on the bus. First bus from Chiayi HSR to Shizhuo/Alishan is 9:30 AM. So I'm not sure what you mean about an 11 AM departure. You'd arrive at Shizhuo at 10:30 or 11. So if you plan to hike for 3-4 hours, you'll need to be very careful not to miss the last bus from Shizhuo to Alishan. I'm also confused about what you mean by spending time in



Taichung or Chiayi in the morning first. If you're planning to do several hours of hiking at Shizhuo AND make it to Alishan that day, I highly suggest you go with this first bus (9:30) as I mentioned above and do go any later than that. And there is nothing to do around most HSR stations in Taiwan, including Taichung HSR station. These stations are like airports, located kind of in the middle of nowhere outside the city centers. Only stay by one if you really have to.

[Reply](#)

Benjamin Wong

November 14, 2023 at 6:47 pm

Thank you Nick! Such a detailed information on Alishan. We are planing a trip there next year. Thank you again!

[Reply](#)

Guy

February 4, 2024 at 12:55 am

Thank you Nick

Quick question – if one comes with a car. can we get into the part with the car? can we drive between the sites in the park or would need to get the train?

[Reply](#)**Nick**

February 6, 2024 at 3:32 pm

If you arrive at Alishan by car, you are only allowed to park at the main tourist village or your hotel (all the hotels are next to the lot), all just inside the park entrance gate. From there, you have to hike, ride the electric shuttle bus, or ride the three small lines of the Alishan Forest Railway to the various scenic areas in the park, including the sunrise viewpoint. Now cars are allowed to any of those spots. However, you can



drive anywhere outside the park, like the villages of Xiding (Eryanping Trail), Shizhuo, and Fenqihu, which I've introduced in this article. These villages are considered part of the "greater Alishan area" but are not inside the park. You can even drive right to the sunrise viewpoint on Eryanping trail.

[Reply](#)



Migs

February 13, 2024 at 8:21 am

Wow. Very detailed information. Thank you for this. It would be my first time traveling to Alishan this coming mid March. I cant book hotel around Alishan Visitor Centre. Could it is peak season.

Would you recommend to stay somewhere nearby as an alternative such as Zhuqi Township or Fenqihu?

[Reply](#)

Nick

February 15, 2024 at 9:45 am

Mid March is cherry blossom season so it will be crazy busy and the hotels at Alishan are probably already sold out. You can still try though. If you can't get a hotel at Alishan, then yes, you can try staying in some areas like Shizhuo, Fenqihu, or Xiding (please see my website Taiwan Obsessed for my



guided to those places). Those places are great too but very different than Alishan. They are mostly about hiking in tea plantations, bamboo forests, rural scenery, and not very touristy like Alishan. They also have sunrise/sunset options, but if you stay at them, it won't be possible to see the sunrise at Alishan.

[Reply](#)

Migs

[February 18, 2024 at 2:56 am](#)

Thank you so much for the reply. I booked a hostel @ Fenqihu for 1 night near the station. Would be better to stay 2 nights instead? Sure will check your site.

[Reply](#)

Nick

[February 23, 2024 at 3:51 pm](#)



The village is very small and not much to do. 1-2 hours is enough to walk the old street, and around 4 hours if you want to hike Ruitai Historic Trail. After that, you will run out of things to do, so I think 1 night is enough. If you want to use it as a base for exploring other places like Shizhuo and Alishan, then sure, 2 nights, but check the bus times carefully because there are not so many buses to/from Fenqihu.

[Reply](#)

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