Taiwan

Winter Birding



Swinhoe's Pheasant by Glen Valentine

Taiwan is not only home to a staggering number of Asia's most wonderful avifauna but is also host of many other highlights that make it the perfect destination for a comfortable and relaxing birding tour. With 29 currently recognised endemics and a further 15 distinctive endemic subspecies, not to mention the incredible East-Asian Flyway, Taiwan has much to offer both the serious and casual birder alike. Located 100 km east of China, just south of Japan and Korea, and slightly north of the Philippines, this small island is less than 400 km long and 150 km wide with rugged central mountains interspersed with deep valleys and boasts a high biodiversity in a very manageable package.

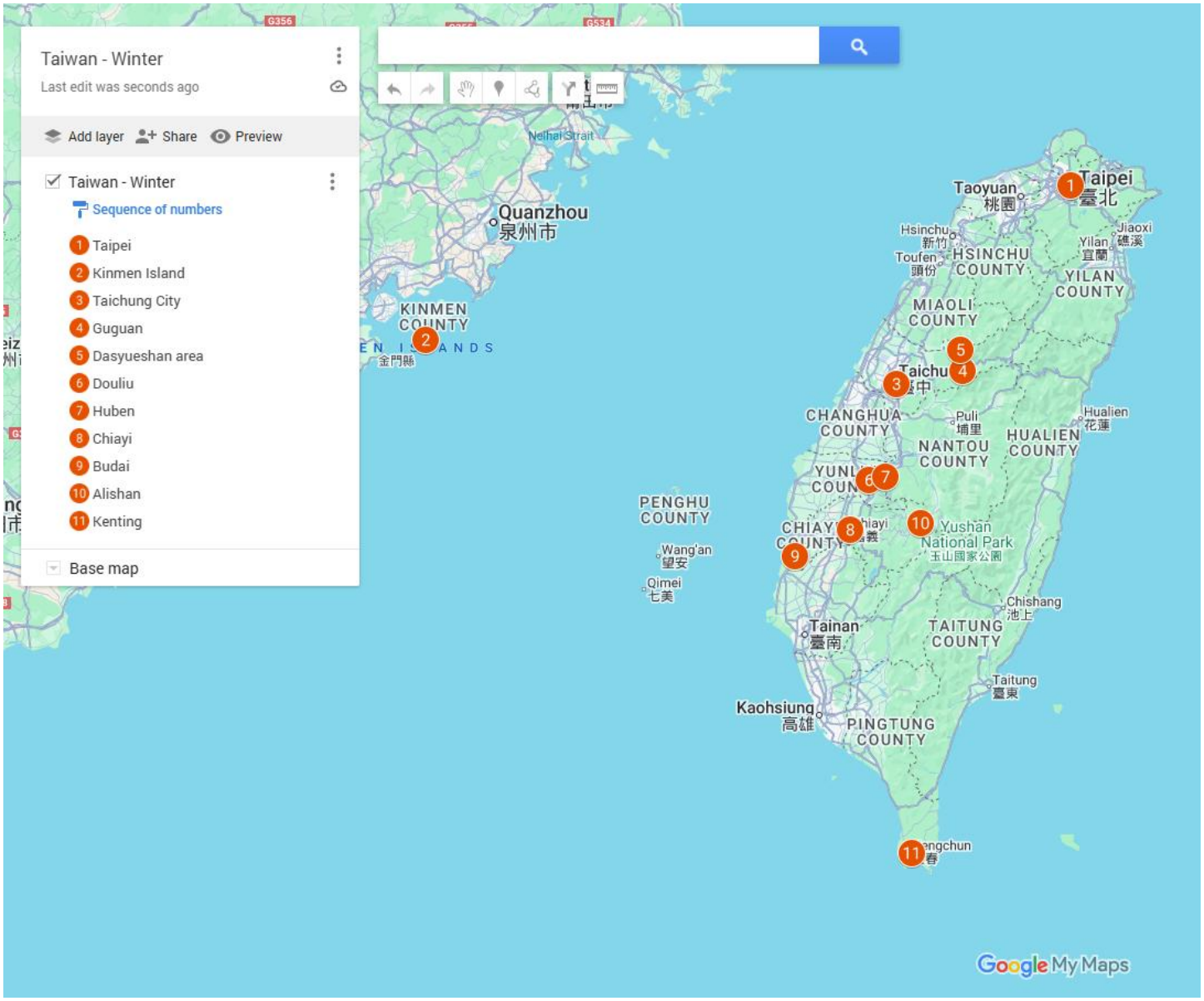
Our Taiwan in Winter tour is a comprehensive tour of Taiwan that focuses on the endemics and other East Asian specialities in the nation's largely pristine and well protected forests. Highlights will include legendary species like the magnificent Swinhoe's and Mikado Pheasants, Taiwan Partridge, the spectacular Taiwan Blue Magpie, Chestnut-bellied and Yellow Tits, Black-necklaced Scimitar Babbler, Flamecrest, Collared Bush Robin, Taiwan Whistling Thrush, Malayan Night Heron, and Black-faced Spoonbill to mention just a few! Most of our time will be spent in the mountains, but we will allow some time in the lowlands and along the coast to search for wetland and coastal species, including various endemic sub-species and other specialities that are otherwise very difficult to see anywhere else.

When circumstances allow, we will also make time for exploring and enjoying the numerous other aspects of Taiwan's natural biodiversity, the fascinating human culture and, of course, for chasing any reported notable vagrants! In addition, the Taiwanese are a super-friendly and welcoming people who have blended the best

parts of unspoiled, traditional Chinese culture with the influence of colonial Japan and the native Austronesian culture. Taiwan is free and democratic, has good infrastructure and is extremely safe for tourists, all of which should ensure a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding birding adventure!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Taipei**
Day 2	**Taipei; flight to Kinmen Island**
Day 3	**Kinmen Island**
Day 4	**Kinmen Island, flight to Taichung City, transfer to Guguan**
Day 5	**Guguan to Lower Dasyueshan**
Day 6	**Middle & Upper Dasyueshan Road**
Day 7	**Dasyueshan Road to Douliu via Huben**
Day 8	**Douliu to Chiayi via Budai Wetlands**
Day 9	**Chiayi to Lower Alishan**
Day 10	**Alishan**
Day 11	**Alishan to Kenting**
Day 12	**Kenting to Taipei & final departure**


Taiwan - Winter
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Sequence of numbers
1 Taipei
2 Kinmen Island
3 Taichung City
4 Guguan
5 Dasyueshan area
6 Douliu
7 Huben
8 Chiayi
9 Budai
10 Alishan
11 Kenting
Base map
Quanzhou
泉州市
KINMEN COUNTY
金門縣
Taipei
臺北
Taoyuan
桃園
Hsinchu
新竹
Toufen
頭份
HSINCHU COUNTY
Jiaoxi
礁溪
Yilan
宜蘭
YILAN COUNTY
MIAOLI COUNTY
Taichung
臺中
CHANGHUA COUNTY
Puli
埔里
Hualien
花蓮
HUALIEN COUNTY
NANTOU COUNTY
PENGHU COUNTY
Wang'an
望安
Qimei
七美
Yushan National Park
玉山國家公園
Chishang
池上
Tainan
臺南
TAITUNG COUNTY
Taitung
臺東
Kaohsiung
高雄
PINGTUNG COUNTY
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Birding sites in detail



Taiwan Partridge by Glen Valentine

Kinmen Island. Also known as Jinmen or Quemoy, the pair of islands just off the Chinese coast is controlled by Taiwan. Due to its location, little development has taken place on Kinmen meaning the environment is in surprisingly good shape by comparison to similar islands of neighbouring Fujian Province, China.

Kinmen County is made up of two islands and a few uninhabited rocks but is far more famous for being the location where Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalists stopped the Communist advance. Battles involving thousands of troops in late 1949 and again in 1958. Heavy artillery pounded the islands until the 1970s. Until the 1990's, Kinmen's beaches were mined to prevent amphibious assaults and even now you'll see agricultural fields dotted with spiked poles to impale paratroopers. The various military remnants, along with the islands best birding areas are preserved by the Kinmen National Park.

We'll explore the various tidal flats, wetlands, lakes, and farmlands of the island. We can expect to find a large number of species today, with targets including Falcated Duck, Chinese Pond Heron, Black-faced Spoonbill, Lesser and Greater Sand Plovers, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Far Eastern Curlew, Red-necked Stint, Black-headed Gull, Oriental Turtle Dove, Greater and Lesser Coucals, White-throated Kingfisher, Eurasian Hoopoe, Long-tailed Shrike, Carrion Crow, Collared Crow, Light-vented Bulbul, Dusky Warbler, Pallas's Leaf Warbler, Yellow-bellied Prinia, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Blue Rock Thrush, Chinese Blackbird, Scaly, Pale and Dusky Thrushes, Black-collared and Chestnut-cheeked Starlings, Fork-tailed Sunbird, Black-faced Bunting, Oriental Greenfinch and Yellow-billed Grosbeak.

Time permitting, we may visit one of more than 1 000 or so traditional Chinese buildings, replete with original wooden frames and tiled roofs dating from World War I era.



Taiwan Blue Magpie by Glen Valentine

Dasyueshan Road (Lower, Middle & Upper). We'll have time to explore this large, diverse, and bird-rich area. In doing so, we'll undoubtedly encounter a huge number of Taiwan's incredible endemics that are available along this superb birding road. The Dasyueshan Road is one of those very special and justifiably famous birding areas that meanders through pristine and



Mikado Pheasant by Glen Valentine

endemics-rich mid and high elevation mixed broadleaf, coniferous and bamboo forest between 1500 and 3000m in elevation. There's no doubt that the Dasyueshan Road will produce some of our most productive and memorable birding of the trip and by the time we've left the area we are likely to have already seen around 90% of the island's endemics!

In the lower elevation, scrubby areas around Dongshi town we'll search for Taiwan Hwamei, Striped Prinia and Vinous-throated Parrotbill, while other noteworthy species that are likely to be encountered include Collared Finchbill, Brown-flanked Bush Warbler, White-rumped and Scaly-breasted Munias, Yellow-bellied Prinia and Chestnut-tailed Starling.

Lower elevation secondary forest, edge and riparian habitats will hopefully produce the scarce and extremely local Chestnut-bellied Tit, as well as Brown Dipper, White-bellied Green Pigeon, Taiwan Scimitar Babbler, Plumbeous Water Redstart, Malayan Night Heron, Grey-chinned Minivet, White-bellied Erpornis, Grey Treepie and Grey-cheeked Fulvetta, Bronzed Drongo, Oriental Turtle Dove, Striated and Pacific Swallows, Rufous-capped Babbler, Taiwan Barbet, and the striking Black Bulbul.

As we meander our way higher up this legendary birding road, we will keep an eye open for the spectacular Swinhoe's Pheasant, the shy and unobtrusive Taiwan Partridge, the smart-looking Taiwan Vivid Niltava, White-backed (Owston's) and Grey-headed Woodpeckers, the vociferous but shy and unobtrusive Large Hawk-Cuckoo, Oriental Cuckoo, Black Eagle, Asian House Martin, Rusty Laughingthrush, Steere's Liocichla, White-tailed Robin, Snowy-browed Flycatcher, Green-backed and the uncommon but striking Yellow Tits, Black-throated Bushtit, the cute Rufous-faced Warbler, White-eared Sibia, the common and lively Taiwan Yuhina, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, the partially diurnal Collared Owlet and if we are extremely lucky, the rare, elusive and nomadic Taiwan Thrush, while mammals could include Formosan Rock Macaque, Pallas's and Perny's Long-nosed Squirrels, Taiwan Serow and Reeve's Muntjac.



Taiwan Yuhina by Glen Valentine

The beautiful and verdant Trochodendron and pine forest higher up with its dense bamboo understory is home to the scarce and nomadic Ashy Wood Pigeon, the local sub-species of Eurasian Jay, Taiwan, and Brown Bullfinches and the rare and elusive Rufous-crowned Laughingthrush, while a nearby waterfall is home



Steere's Liocichla by Glen Valentine

to Little Forktail. Our main target in the forest at the top of the road is the graceful Mikado Pheasant. While staking them out along the road or at the forest edge at the top, we're likely to be entertained by the very confiding White-whiskered Laughingthrush and Coastal Striped Squirrel. In the same area, we'll also be alert for White-browed (Sombre) and the smart Collared Bush (Johnstone's) Robins, Taiwan Rosefinch, Taiwan Cupwing and the very smart Flamecrest. As we enter the hemlock and dwarf bamboo forest at the highest point, we will meet the distinctive local subspecies of Spotted Nutcracker and Coal Tit, as well as (Taiwan) Yellow-bellied and Taiwan Bush Warblers, Taiwan Fulvetta, Taiwan Barwing, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Wren, and Taiwan Shortwing. As for the views here, they are simply breath-taking: in the distance we'll see Taiwan's highest peak, Yushan, just short of 4 000 meters (13 000ft).

In the evenings there will be the option to search for Mountain and Collared Scops Owls.

Budai Wetlands. We'll have time on at least one afternoon and/or morning to explore the vast Budai Wetlands where the extensive ponds, mudflats and marshy edges may yield noteworthy, target species like Yellow and Cinnamon Bitterns, Oriental Pratincole, Slaty-breasted Rail, Chinese Egret and Black-faced Spoonbill. Other more readily encountered species include Intermediate Egret, Osprey, Black-winged Kite, Pied Avocet, Whiskered, White-winged, Caspian and Little Terns, Common Kingfisher, and Ruddy-breasted Crake. Although a bit late in the season for winter waders, there will likely still be small numbers of Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, Kentish and Pacific Golden Plovers, Terek, Marsh, and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Red-necked and Long-toed Stints, Grey-tailed Tattler and Eurasian Curlew hanging around. If we are very fortunate, we may even find a Great Knot, Asian Dowitcher, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Far Eastern Curlew or Roseate Tern in the mix.

Scrubby embankments could hold Zitting and Golden-headed Cisticolas, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, Chestnut-tailed and White-shouldered Starlings, Eastern Yellow Wagtail and Long-tailed Shrike.

Alishan area. The scenic and bird rich Alishan area and Yushan National Park is an excellent back-up site for all of Taiwan's forest endemics and specialties that were searched for along the Dasyueshan Road. At a similar altitude and habitat, many of these now-familiar species will be enjoyed once again and we'll also have further chances of encountering any species we



Rufous-crowned Laughingthrush by Glen Valentine



Black-faced Spoonbill by Glen Valentine

may have missed at Dasyueshan. Like the Dasyueshan area, the scenery is spectacular, and we are bound to have a fabulous time birding and traversing the Alishan area.

Potential exciting new birds could include Golden Parrotbill, Taiwan Fulvetta, Taiwan Bullfinch, Taiwan Rosefinch, the rare but stunning Taiwan Thrush, Taiwan Shortwing, Taiwan Partridge, and Mountain Hawk-Eagle, all of which can be quite tricky to find in the Dasyueshan area. The upper reaches of Yushan National Park also provide our best chance of seeing the sometimes-elusive Mikado Pheasant, especially if conditions are overcast and drizzly. Other fabulous Taiwanese species we'll likely encounter during our time in the area include Steere's Liocichla, Taiwan Barwing, Collared and White-browed (Sombre) Bush Robins, White-eared Sibia, Taiwan Yuhina, White-whiskered Laughingthrush and Taiwan Bush Warbler, while more widespread species such as Black Eagle, Crested Goshawk, Green-backed Tit, Black-throated Bushtit and Spotted Nutcracker are also likely to appear.

Kenting area. Our main target species in the Kenting area, on the extreme south-eastern tip of the island will be the range restricted and endemic Styan's Bulbul, which we should have no trouble finding. Other species that inhabit this dry, scrubby habitat include Common and Barred Buttonquails, White-cheeked Starling, Golden-headed and Zitting Cisticolas, Yellow-bellied and Plain Prinias, Striated Swallow and Savanna Nightjar.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Undemanding to moderate. Standard of food & accommodation can be basic at times. Spectacular scenery.
Birding Ease		Mostly easy but forest birding & certain species can be challenging at times.
Accommodation		Variable, from good in large cities to simple/basic in remoter areas. The overall standard of lodging is inferior to most neighbouring countries.
Walking / Trails		Easy walking along roads & good, wide tracks or trails. Some forest trails that are generally easy & well-maintained. Rain & snow is possible, which can make trails more difficult.
Vehicles / Roads		Good quality roads & vehicle, mostly short drives of 2-3 hours. One longer drive of 4-5 hours.
Photography		Worthwhile to good. No dedicated hides. Can be more challenging in forest environments.
Annoyances		Can be cool to cold with some rain or snow in mountain areas.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 12;
- All lodgings;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- This is a traditional fast-paced birding tour with only a moderate amount of walking on usually good surfaces.
- There will be three or four journeys of about 2-3 hours each throughout the trip, mostly done after dark on good freeways. There will be at least one longer drive of 4-5 hours at the end of the tour.
- Although this Taiwan tour does not require a high level of fitness, participants should be in good general health as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- The vehicles used are comfortable.
- A fair bit of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover fair distances to get to the best areas for birds and animals. The more luggage you pack, the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44 lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (18 lb) for hand luggage.
- Accommodation is variable, ranging from good in large cities to simple/basic in remoter areas. The overall standard of lodging is inferior to most neighbouring countries. Some lodges have narrow stairs and inclines which can be slippery in rain or snow. High altitude accommodation can be cold to very cold if weather conditions are poor.
- It is best to change currency into Taiwan Dollars (NT$) on arrival at the airport.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour starts on day 1 with an arrival day in Taipei, do arrive by 17:00 to enjoy a welcome dinner. The tour will conclude around midday on day 12 at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, Taipei.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, Taipei (IATA: TPE) is the main port of entry for international flights into Taiwan.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.