

LES *iles*

FEBRUARY 2020

南越渡假風情
Vacation in Southern Vietnam

COMPLIMENTARY COPY 贈閱

UNI AIR

Kinmen's Ancient Villages and Nature Trails 金門漫漫遊

BY DANA TER



Kinmen, with its gold-sand beaches and lapping waves, isn't the type of island paradise most would imagine. Located closer to Mainland China than Taiwan and visible to Xiamen on a clear day, the coast is pockmarked with anti-landing barricades. For history buffs, Kinmen conjures many a romantic image, and indeed visitors come to soak in its military history as much as its sun, told at places such as the Gunningtuo Battle Museum, dedicated to the Battle of Gunningtuo during the Chinese Civil War.

Venture inland, however, and discover there's more to the island, from its ancient villages to its nature trails. About 25 percent of Kinmen is a national park and winter is the ideal time to visit, when flocks of migratory birds — more than 300 bird species have been counted — make its ponds and lakes their home. The mild weather and lack of crowds also make it most pleasant to explore old alleys that lead to shophouses and temples.

Start with Jincheng Township, the island's largest town, where you'll find Zhushan Village, a settlement



1. Kinmen is home to well-preserved Minnan architecture. Shanhou Folk Culture Village has rows of Minnan-style buildings. | 2. The two sides of Mofan Street are lined with mixed-style shop buildings combining Chinese and Western architecture. | 3. Coastal defenses can still be found on some of Kinmen's beaches. | 4. Taihu is Kinmen's largest artificial freshwater lake. A bike route lines its shore. | 5. Kinmen Kaoliang, made from fermented sorghum, is a famous variety of *baijiu*, or white liquor.

1. 金門保有完整的閩南建築聚落群，山后聚落可見成排的閩南建築。| 2. 模範街街道兩旁羅列兼具中西建築美感的二進式店屋。| 3. 金門海灘不時可見過去留存下來的軌條砦裝置。| 4. 太湖是金門最大的人工淡水湖，並規劃有自行車道。| 5. 金門為高粱產地，所製作的高粱酒香氣足，為著名白酒。

that dates to the Tang dynasty. The Hsueh family, who came from Fujian Province in the 7th century, built a lovely pond and low-rise buildings with red-tiled roofs around it, an architectural style similar to villages found in Fujian. The two ancestral shrines with colorful floral carvings are kept mostly intact and many of the old houses have been converted into homestays.

Also in Jincheng is Mofan Street, made famous by Ming-dynasty commander Koxinga, who trained his troops here before launching a successful attack to drive the Dutch out of Tainan. A few hundred years later, in the 1920s, the street was re-developed into its present state of arched red-brick buildings that take design influences from Chinese and Western architecture and now house restaurants, cafés, and souvenir shops.

Jinsha Township, home to the picturesque Ronghu Lake and Jinsha Dam, is also known for Shanhou Folk Culture Village, a series of Minnan-style houses built in the late 19th century. Regimented rows of houses

face the ocean, and within the compound is a former school and an ancestral shrine of the Wang clan. During autumn, sorghum — the grain used to produce Kaoliang, Kinmen's most well-known liquor export — blooms in Jinsha and the bright-red sorghum fields are wonderful to cycle around in.

Over in Jinhu Township, it's a different sort of nature experience. There's Taihu, a man-made lake with cycling paths, and Caicuo Ancient Trail is an enchanting hiking trail that starts at the foot of Mount Taiwu and passes by a fortress. Centuries ago, traders hauled baskets of tofu and vegetables on this trail, which gave it its other name, the rather funny-sounding Tofu Trail.

Steeped in history and dramatic scenery, there's more than meets the eye in Kinmen. The anti-landing barricades on its beaches might suggest a hostile history, but its charming old villages tell a simple and blissful story of what everyday life must once have been like on the island. 🍷

