

Over the handlebars: Xindian Stream and Danshui River Bikeway

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The Xindian Stream and Danshui River Bikeway, in the western part of the city, is not unlike most of the other riverside trails that outline Taipei: a trail surrounded by green grass, river views and tree-lined shores. It even has aspects that make it unique, such as tidal flats where nature literally knocks on Taipei's pavement door.

However, aside from all that the city's system of bikeways have to offer, they are also notable for what they are deficient in: air and noise pollution, oppressive traffic and concrete

shadows. They allow users to traverse the city in a way clogged city streets and lanes don't: looking from the outside in.

From the bikeways, there is relatively easy access to much of what Taipei has to offer, such as night markets, temples, parks and restaurants. The difference for bikeway users, however, is that you are not forced to be a dodging, veering, sweating part of the "colorful" scene at each - unless you so choose. The Xindian-Danshui Bikeway is no different.

Just off the bikeway are several popular sites: The Taipei Water Park, the Youth Park, Longshan Temple, Snake Alley, Gongguan Night Market, National Taiwan University, and the Xiahai City God Temple, among others.

While each one of these could be a destination unto itself, what makes them noteworthy is the ease with which a bikeway user can access them all in a single day's trip from the riverside. Granted, getting onto and off of the bikeway and into the city isn't always easy, as exits and entrances are not always clearly marked or, moreover, exceedingly abundant.

However, with a bit of effort, one can take advantage of this unique way to sightsee without having to deal with the pitfalls of commuting in the city.

"The path is a God-send," said Kate Hiscock, 25, an English teacher from South Africa. Hiscock said the route provides an escape from the hustle and bustle of city life — while allowing visitors to enjoy its charms. "(Riding the path), one can see lots of things, but miss out on a lot of the traffic and congestion of the city streets."

The trail itself is no slouch when it comes to sites: it weaves through lots of greenery, starting at Jingmei, and continues through impressive riverside scenery and several different parks. It ends at Dadaocheng Wharf, just past the tidal flats of Wild Goose Park.

Along the way, park users can take advantage of the park's many amenities, such as tennis, basketball or badminton courts — or one of the many roller skating rinks.

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