

## TRAVEL

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*A few years ago Fulong's gold-sand beach had nearly disappeared. But now it's back and as popular as ever*

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Left: Families and groups of young adults enjoy the section of Fulong Beach supervised by lifeguards from the Bellevue Hotel. The orange-roofed Dong Sing Temple and its nearby beach can be seen in the background.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Below: Hotel employees on jet skis tow paddleboats to shore as the section of Fulong Beach accessible from Rainbow Bridge, left, closes for the evening.

PHOTO: RON BROWNLOW, TAIPEI TIMES

Inset: Paddleboats and two large sand castles occupy the western side of Fulong Beach, while the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant rises in the distance.

PHOTO: RON BROWNLOW, TAIPEI TIMES

It's famous as the location of the Ho-Hai-Yan Rock Festival (海洋音樂祭) every July, but Fulong Beach (福隆海灘) offers plenty of diversions for beachgoers long after the band shell has been dismantled. The sparkle of the beach's golden sands against a backdrop of emerald-colored hills make it postcard perfect, while the clear and temperate ocean water is popular with frolicking children and surfers alike.

Fulong Beach is bordered by both the ocean and Shuangsi River (雙溪河). As you walk over the sweeping arch of Rainbow Bridge (彩虹橋) towards the beach, take a moment to stop and savor the scenery. To your right, you will see rolling green hills, Fulong Beach Park's (富隆海濱公園) weather-darkened wood pavilion and the gleaming exterior of Dong Sing Temple (東興宮), which sits beyond the eastern edge of the beach. To the left families glide in paddleboats across the glittering surface of Shuangsi, which on a sunny day draws your eye toward a horizon with blue skies, glowing clouds — and the gleaming silver stack of a nuclear power plant.

The Fourth Nuclear Power Plant (核四) is not scheduled to go online until next year, but it has been a source of controversy since building began in 1997. Local business owners and beach-lovers complain that the construction has slowly but steadily eroded Fulong Beach into a ghost of its former self; power plant supporters blame typhoons.

Wu Xue Hua (吳雪華), the owner of Hai Du Hotel (海都旅館) at 25 Fulong St, Gongliao Township, Taipei County (台北縣貢寮鄉福隆街25號) tel: (02) 2499-1839, near the beachfront, remembers a time three or four years ago when the beach had been reduced to a slither and the ocean lapped at the foot of Rainbow Bridge. The shore has gradually reappeared, however, and Fulong is as popular as it ever was, says Wu, whose grandfather opened Hai Du Hotel 44 years ago (rooms are NT\$1,200 for two people, and NT\$2,000 for four people).

Wu extols the gentle virtues of the beach, which make it a relaxing place to hang out on a summer day: "The sand here is very golden, very beautiful and fine, and the beach slopes very gradually into the ocean, so it is safe to play in the water."

Before you get to bury your toes in the shimmering sand, you must stop by the ticket booth in front of Rainbow Bridge and pay a NT\$90 entrance fee (NT\$70 for students). The span of beach on the opposite end of the bridge is managed by Fulong Bellevue Hotel (福隆貝悅酒店) and watched over by a pair of lifeguards. Swimmers can frolic in a roped-off swimming area from 8am to 5:30pm, at which point they are ordered out of the water (though you can dwell on the sand until 7pm).

If you feel comfortable venturing away from the lifeguards, you can extend your ocean time by heading east towards the beach in front of Dong Sing Temple by swimming along the shore or wading across the inlet that connects Shuangsi River to the ocean. While the inlet is relatively shallow, make sure to watch for undertows and the sharp rocks and occasional glass bottle that may lie beneath the water's tepid surface.

Fulong's clear seawater and consistent beach breaks make it a popular destination for surfers. Being Outdoors (地球人), located in front of the train station at 16 Fulong St, Gongliao Township, Taipei County (台北縣貢寮鄉福隆街16號) tel: (02) 2499-1372, offers all-day surfboard rentals from 9am to 6pm for NT\$550 each. The surf shop also provides lessons and operates its own hotel, with rates starting from NT\$1,200 per night for a dorm-style room that can accommodate up to four people.

Taxi-yellow paddleboats are available for adults and children aged 7 and up from stalls that are also owned and operated by Fulong Bellevue Hotel. Rental is NT\$300 for boats on the ocean, while boats on Shuangsi River are NT\$200.

Lazier beachgoers can spend a pleasant afternoon sifting sand between their toes and watching swimmers frolic in the waves. Renting a futami mat will set you back NT\$50; white plastic lounge chairs (NT\$150) and beach umbrellas (NT\$250) are also available.

We were ravenous after a day of soaking up the rays, so after rinsing off at the free showers (lockers are available for NT\$30) behind the drink stand near the ticket booth, we went hunting for food. Fulong is famed for its lunchboxes, which are sold along Fulong Street near the train station

and usually consist of rice topped with shrimp, fish and other seafood. At about NT\$55 each, they make a cheap and quick meal for beachgoers; tourists gleefully tucking in from the white cardboard boxes are as much a part of Fulong's scenery as its green hills.

Ironically, the demand for lunchboxes makes actual seafood restaurants somewhat harder to find. Following Wu's recommendation, we took a pleasant stroll on a path through the thickets of Fulong Beach Park to Fu Shi Seafood (富士海鮮) near Dong Sing Temple. There we were greeted by friendly wait staff, who helped us select our meal from the tanks and cases in front of the restaurant.

Seafood prices at Fu Shi Seafood vary according to weight and season, but the spread of spiny lobster, lightly fried oysters, freshly caught calamari, yellowtail sashimi, fried rice and two big bottles of Taiwan Beer that my gluttonous dining companion and I ordered set us back just NT\$1,400. We ate on the restaurant's spacious wooden pavilion, enjoying the gentle ocean breezes and our nighttime view of the beach as the lights of Rainbow Bridge sparkled in the near distance.

## IF YOU GO

### GETTING THERE

>> Fulong Beach is on Provincial Highway No. 2, also known as the Coastal Highway, which runs from Tamsui (淡水) to Jinshan (金山), in Shihmen Township (石門鄉), Taipei County. From Taipei Main Station, take Taiwan Rail's Eastern Line to Fulong Station. The trip takes approximately 90 minutes. For schedule and ticketing information, visit [www.railway.gov.tw/index.htm](http://www.railway.gov.tw/index.htm)

### FACILITIES

>> Public showers and restrooms are located on the inland side of Rainbow Bridge. After crossing the bridge, turn left and follow the wooden walkway. Lockers are available for NT\$30 each

### ON THE NET

>> [www.necoast-nsa.gov.tw/en/index.php?act=product&CategoryID=325](http://www.necoast-nsa.gov.tw/en/index.php?act=product&CategoryID=325)



# Footloose in Fulong