

FEATURES



Yangmingshan says it with flowers

Each year the Yangmingshan Flower Festival draws crowds in the hundreds of thousands, with its vivid canopies of rhododendrons, azaleas and six kinds of cherry blossom

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW
STAFF REPORTER

Yesterday saw the official opening of the 2009 Yangmingshan Flower Festival (陽明山花季), though over the past week there has been a buildup of visitors to check out the cherry blossoms that have turned Yangming Park (陽明公園) and other areas in Yangmingshan National Park (陽明山國家公園) into flower gardens of pink and red. Over the following weeks the cherry blossom will be followed by the blooming of various kinds of rhododendron and azalea.

Lavish floral arrangements welcome visitors at such focal points of the festival as Yangmingshan Flower Clock (陽明山花鐘) and fountain pond outside Yangming Park, but for the rest, nature puts on the best show. Even from the roadside, there are delightful vistas in which white, pink and red seem to have been splashed

haphazardly across the green slopes of Yangmingshan.

For those who want to take something back home, local nurseries have set up roadside stands in which you can pick up a cherry tree, camellia or other plant for relocation to your balcony or garden for just a couple of hundred NT dollars.

Sitting on a wobbly plastic chair sipping over-priced fruit tea can be made quite appealing if the location is in a blooming cherry grove, the ground strewn with petals. Just put the smell of fried stinky tofu from the roadside stand out of your mind, and sit back to enjoy the colors and the breeze. If you listen carefully, you can hear the hoards of digital cameras clicking away as tens of thousands of images are captured for posterity.

The cherry blossoms are centered on Yangming

Park, along Hushan Road (湖山路) from the Multistory Parking Lot of Yangmingshan National Park (立體停車場) in the direction of Shilin (士林), and in the gardens near the 2nd Yangmingshan National Park Parking Lot (第二停車場). There are six types of cherry blossom blooming at slightly different times, which make up the subtly different backdrops that are so cherished by amateur photographers and their significant others.

Careful planning is advised for those making the trip, because the massive crowds can make flower appreciation something of a logistical nightmare. On Thursday, despite the fact that the event had not yet officially begun, the Taipei City Government estimated that 1.5 million people visited the park. Starting this weekend, and on subsequent Saturdays and Sundays

through March 21 and March 22, access controls will be imposed on Yangde Boulevard (仰德大道), the main route into the Yangmingshan area. Private cars without a permit will not be permitted to use the road to enter the park between 6am and 4pm, or use it to exit the park from 2pm to 6pm, when access controls are in force. There are a large number of alternate routes for those who don't mind circuitous drives along narrow mountain roads, but the best way to visit the park, either on weekdays or weekends, is to make use of the shuttle bus services provided by Taipei City Government that depart from Jiantan (劍潭), Shilin, Xinbeitou (新北投), Yuanshan (圓山), Shipai (石牌), and Taipei Main Station MRT stations. Shuttle buses between the main locations where flowers are on display are also available.

FESTIVAL NOTES:

WHAT: 2009 Yangmingshan Flower Festival (陽明山花季)
WHERE: Yangming Park (陽明公園) and other areas in Yangmingshan National Park (陽明山國家公園)
WHEN: Until March 22
ON THE NET: A map and information on transport (in Chinese) can be found at the festival's Web site, 2009yms.com.tw/page5.html. Details about access controls can be found at the Taipei City Police Department's Web site, cd.tcpd.gov.tw

GETTING THERE

Buses connecting from the MRT Danshui Line (淡水線)

- >> Red 5 (紅5) bus from Jiantan MRT Station (劍潭捷運站)
- >> No. 260 bus from Shilin MRT Station (士林捷運站)
- >> No. 230 bus from Xinbeitou MRT Station (新北投捷運站)

Shuttle buses to the 2nd Yangmingshan National Park Parking Lot (第二停車場)

- >> No. 126 bus from Taipei Main Station (台北車站)
- >> No. 127 bus from Yuanshan MRT Station (圓山捷運站)
- >> No. 128 bus from Shipai MRT Station (石牌捷運站)
- >> No. 129 bus from Jiantan MRT Station (劍潭捷運站)
- >> No. 130 bus from Yangmingshan Flower Clock (陽明山花鐘)
- >> No. 131 bus from Zhuzihu (竹子湖)

Shuttle bus to Yangmingshan terminus (陽明總站)

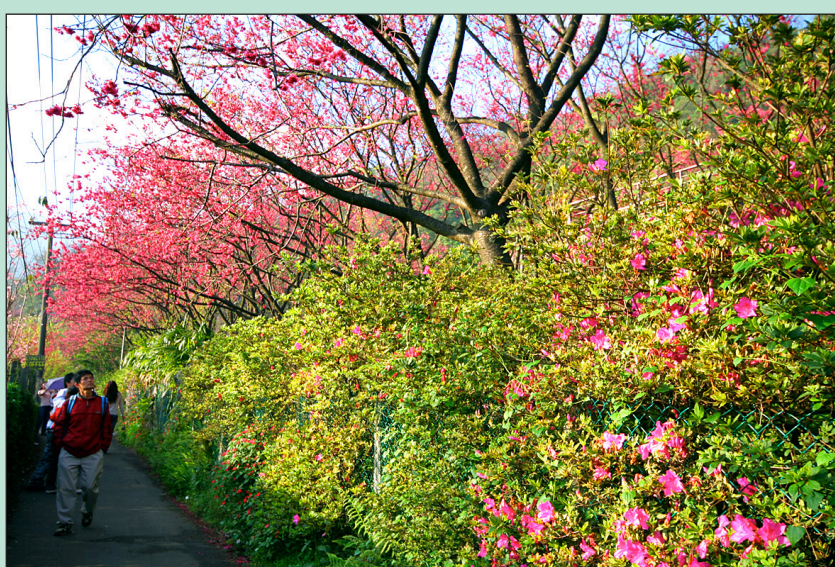
- >> No. 130 commuter (130區) bus from Yangmingshan Flower Clock (陽明山花鐘)

Parking spaces are available at the Multistory Parking Lot of Yangmingshan National Park (立體停車場) and the 2nd Yangmingshan National Park Parking Lot (第二停車場)

SOURCE: YANGMINGSHAN FLOWER FESTIVAL



Cherry blossoms are the stars of the show at the Yangmingshan Flower Festival.



PHOTOS: IAN BARTHOLOMEW AND LIU HSIN-DE, TAIPEI TIMES