

Visitors flock to the clock in the rock

遊客湧入太極峽谷眺望「石時鐘」

How come there is a large clock in the rock in Taiji Gorge, showing the time of the big 921 earthquake? This "stone clock" that appeared after the 921 earthquake has clearly visible hour and minute hands pointing to 1.47. No one seeing this stamp left by the great earthquake can fail to take a deep breath in **awe** of the mysterious ways of the creator.

The 921 earthquake struck at 1.47am on Sep 21, 1999. After the quake, an astonished Tsai Cheng-wei, an elected representative in Jhushan Township close to Taiji Gorge, noticed that a "clock" had appeared in the rock.

Tsai said a **landslide** occurred in Taiji Gorge in 1986, tragically killing 28 people and injuring more than 30 others. Since then, the gorge was closed off and it didn't open again until April 2006 when a suspension bridge popularly called the "Ladder to Heaven" was completed and gave the public a chance to see the clock in the rock with their own eyes.

If you walk to the middle of the 136m long Ladder to Heaven, and then look in the 11 o'clock direction you can see the clock in the rock. After a few sharp-eyed Internet users discovered this odd view, they took pictures and posted them to the Internet.

Tsai said there was no path through which one can reach the clock in the rock, but that he had climbed to a spot close by to get a better look. He estimates that the clock is about 6m long and 4m wide. A big chunk of rock fell out of the cliff side during the earthquake, leaving a shape with cracks that looks like the hour, minute and second hands. Many years of **insufficient** maintenance, however, has slowly changed the shape of the rock clock. What was at first an oblong shape has now changed into a shield shape as moss and grass have begun to grow on the face of the rock.

Tsai Yi-chu, a Nantou county councilor, said the fish and dragon shaped **fossils** that could be seen at Taiji Gorge's fossil observation platform in the past have been covered up by moss and grass, and that if the clock in the rock is not protected soon, it is very likely that it also will be covered up by growth.

Nantou County government's tourist chief Hung Wen-neng said that if he hadn't been told by reporters he would not have known of this wonder in Taiji Gorge. He also said that he will visit the area in the near future and see what should be done to protect the view.

(LIBERTY TIMES, TRANSLATED BY PERRY SVENSSON)



「太極峽谷峭壁上怎麼會掛了個大時鐘？而且還是九二一發生的時間？」這個由九二一地震震出來的「石時鐘」，時針、分針清清楚楚，直指一時四十七分。大地震留下的印記，讓所有看到的人不禁讚嘆造物之神奇。

民國八十八年九月二十一日凌晨一時四十七分，發生了「九二一」大地震，太極峽谷附近的竹山鎮民代表蔡承威，注意到災後峭壁上出現個「石時鐘」，嚇了一大跳。

蔡承威說，太極峽谷在民國七十五年間發生山崩，造成二十八人死亡、三十多人輕重傷的慘劇，自此全面封閉，直至九十五年四月間，俗稱天梯的「梯子吊橋」完工後，才重新對外開放，民眾因此有機會目睹「石時鐘」。

天梯全長一百三十六公尺，走到天梯中間並朝十一點鐘方向眺望，就能看到「石時鐘」。這個奇景被部分眼尖的網友發現，拍下照片後貼上網分享。

蔡承威說，「石時鐘」對外並無通道，但他曾冒險攀登到最近距離查看，推測「石時鐘」長約六公尺，寬約四公尺，主要是偌大的峭壁因地牛翻身崩落一角，狀似時鐘，加上岩壁表面裂痕，猶如時針、分針、秒針。但多年來缺乏有效管理，以致「石時鐘」外貌逐漸變樣，原本是橢圓形，目前因下方青苔、雜草往上延伸而變成盾牌狀。

縣議員蔡宜助進一步表示，太極峽谷裡頭的化石平台景點，原本也是清晰可見的魚龍狀化石已被叢生雜草淹沒，若「石時鐘」不儘速保護，也極有可能步上化石平台景點的後塵。

南投縣政府觀光處長洪文能表示，如果果不是記者告知，他根本沒聽說太極峽谷內有此景觀，近日將實地前往踏勘，並善盡保護之責。

(自由時報記者謝介裕)



Top: The clock in the rock showing 1.47, the time the great 921 earthquake struck in the morning of Sep 21, 1999.

Above: People walk across the Ladder to Heaven suspension bridge in Taiji Gorge in Nantou County's Jhushan Township on March 14.

PHOTOS: HSIEH CHIEH-YU, LIBERTY TIMES

最上圖：「石時鐘」直指民國八十八年九二一地震發生的一點四十七分。
上圖：三月十四日，民眾通行南投縣竹山太極峽谷天梯。

照片：自由時報記者謝介裕攝

TODAY'S WORDS

今日單字

1. awe /ə/ n.

敬畏 (jing4 wei4), 驚嘆 (jing1 tan4)

例: The visitors gazed in awe at the paintings.

(參觀民眾帶著讚嘆的眼神欣賞畫作。)

2. landslide /'lænd,slaɪd/ n.

山崩 (shan1 beng1)

例: Soldiers are helping out with the cleanup following landslides in the area.

(士兵們在山崩地區協助清理環境。)

3. insufficient /,ɪnsə'fɪʃənt/ adj.

不足的 (bu4 zu2 de5)

例: There was insufficient interest in taking the show to Vancouver.

(因為民眾興趣不高，所以該表演未引進溫哥華。)

4. fossil /'fɒsl/ n.

化石 (hua4 shi2)

例: Palaeontologists are investigating reports that fossils have been discovered near the coast.

(據報海岸附近發現化石，古生物學家正在進行考證。)