

TRAVEL

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The view from the third-floor bedroom at Summer Point Jr, a bed-and-breakfast in Kenting National Park. PHOTO COURTESY OF TC LIN

The coast is clear

With tranquil, homey and stylish accommodations and ocean views, you won't want to leave your bed at Summer Point Jr, let alone your room

BY DAVID CHEN
STAFF REPORTER

At Summer Point Jr, you can see the ocean while lying in bed. The Pacific coastline is the first thing guests see when looking out the window of this bed-and-breakfast in Jialeshui (佳樂水), a secluded beach area located in Kenting National Park, some 10km from Taiwan's southernmost tip.

The view inspired Jessie Hong (洪慧君) to open Summer Point Jr two years ago.

The 27-year-old Taipei native had just moved to the area to be with her boyfriend and business partner Chris Hsia (夏祖禹), who has lived in Jialeshui since 2005, when he started the original Summer Point, a guesthouse and hostel located a few kilometers away.

Hong and Hsia are surfing fanatics, which explains their choice of locale, not to mention the surfboards lined up in front of their building. Jialeshui is a popular spot with surfers, and unless you're into chasing waves, there's nothing else to do here.

And that's exactly the reason to visit. Hong and Hsia have designed their two-room bed-and-breakfast as a peaceful getaway. Hong says their main goal is to make people "feel at home," and the couple display some keen skills when it comes to interior decoration.

Each room takes up its own floor in this rented three-story house, which is part of a small fishing village community that dates back to the mid-1970s. Hong and Hsia fully refurbished the building, knocking down walls, installing wood floors and repainting.

They furnished the rooms with reconditioned secondhand easy chairs and sofas, and warm lighting is provided by funky lamps — there was not one fluorescent tube in sight. The rooms are painted in bright colors, with the third floor done in bold red and the second floor in lime green.

If you must watch television, the rooms have flat-screen TVs with cable. But my companion and I barely noticed the set during our stay. We were too busy enjoying the private, wood-deck balcony that was part of the third-floor room.

The balcony is almost as big as the bedroom itself. It's certainly spacious enough for, say, a morning yoga session (get up early, though, as there isn't much shade) or a cocktail party for a half dozen people.

At night, we sat on a swinging chair for two, listening to the crashing waves and relishing the ocean breezes. Later, we pulled a wicker sofa closer to the balcony ledge, propped our feet up and spent several hours



Top left and above: The third-floor bedroom at Summer Point Jr. Left: The first floor of Summer Point Jr is a restaurant-cum-cafe serving American-style brunches and burgers.

PHOTOS: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

gazing at the stars.

The third-floor bedroom has an unusual centerpiece: its bathroom, which takes up nearly a third of the space and is set off by two 1m-tall walls. Yes, the toilet and bathtub sit out in the open, with the walls just high enough to block occupants from view — but not from all angles.

Hong acknowledged that this might seem awkward even for the most intimate of couples (my sweetheart and I took turns waiting on the balcony), but the arrangement was a trade-off. Hong and Hsia wanted to make this 6-ping (1 ping = 3.3m²) room feel as spacious as possible, and the only way to do that was to tear down the bathroom's original walls, she said.

It works, though, because the bathroom is beautiful, with its checkered black and white tiles and a classic-looking bathtub, which rests on brass feet. The tub is perfectly suited for a long soak in a bubble bath.

The second-floor room is more suitable for small families and has a fully enclosed bathroom, says Hong.

The following morning, it was hard to bring ourselves to leave the room and go downstairs for breakfast. Lying in bed and looking past the balcony, we could see the coastline in the distance, with a handful

of surfers in the water appearing as tiny, floating black dots.

On Summer Point Jr's first floor is a cafe-cum-restaurant, which, furnished with couches and filled with the sound of bossa nova and reggae playing on the stereo, has a casual beach bar vibe. The food is American-style brunches and burgers, and the menu will seem familiar to some visitors. Hong happens to be one of the founders and co-owners of The Diner (樂子) restaurant chain.

The beach is a five-minute walk away, and though it's not ideal for swimming — the water is choppy — you can easily spend an afternoon sunbathing and partaking in the occasional dip. A more swimmer-friendly beach, Fengchuishha (風吹砂), lies several kilometers away on Highway 26.

If the waves inspire you, Hsia, who is a trained surf lifeguard, offers surfing lessons. The 29-year-old Kaohsiung native says one reason that surfers favor Jialeshui is that the waves are more consistent compared to other spots in Taiwan.

In addition to Summer Point Jr, there are several other guesthouses in the vicinity that also cater to surfers and vacationers. Other than that, though, visitors will find the surroundings, part of Gangkou Village (港口), to be a sleepy neighborhood with around 100

residents and a few stray dogs.

According to the Kenting National Park Web site, former president Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國) came up with the name Jialeshui, literally "beautiful joyful waters," after a visit to the area in the mid-1970s.

Hsia says Summer Point Jr's neighborhood was built according to Chiang's wishes. At the time, the villagers, mostly military retirees, were living in shanties close to the beach. Chiang deemed this to be too dangerous, and ordered that sturdier housing be built for the residents and sold to them at low cost, says Hsia.

It certainly appears to be a charmed life for Hsia and Hong, who spend early mornings in the water chasing swells before returning to cook breakfast for their guests. But they are hardly surf bums — the food and the rooms attest to their meticulous attention to detail.

You do have to pay a little more than average for this peace and quiet: it's NT\$3,200 a night on weekends during the high season, which includes breakfast. (The original Summer Point offers slightly lower rates, at NT\$2,300 a night for a room with double bed).

Then there's transportation. From northern Taiwan, the Taiwan High Speed Rail gets you there the fastest. Hsia and Hong will arrange taxi transportation from Zuoying

Station (高鐵左營車站), which costs between NT\$400 to NT\$500 per person if shared. The trip from Zuoying Station to Jialeshui takes around two hours. If you want to explore the surrounding area, scooters can be rented in nearby Hengchun (恆春).

The cost is practically worth it for the private ocean view alone. And Hong offers the right kind of advice for visitors: bring a book and remember, "Just relax, slow down."

GUESTHOUSE INFO

Summer Point Jr
252 Chashan Rd, Manjhou Township, Pingtung County (屏東縣滿洲鄉港口村茶山路252號)

For reservations, contact Chris Hsia at 0936-416-006 or send an e-mail to hsiachris7028@yahoo.com.tw

One night's stay is NT\$3,200 on weekends and NT\$2,800 on weekdays during high season, which is from June to September; NT\$2,800 on weekends and NT\$2,400 on weekdays during low season

Reservations are best made two weeks in advance during high season

Summer Point Jr does not have a Web site, but Summer Point, its sister guesthouse, does: www.summerpoint.idv.tw

IF YOU GO

The Taiwan High Speed Rail is the fastest way to get to Summer Point Jr, which is located about two hours by car from Zuoying Station (高鐵左營車站)

The bed-and-breakfast can arrange for a taxi pickup at the station. Call Chris at 0936-416-006 for details. Taxis cost NT\$400 to NT\$500 per person in a shared van

OTHER GUESTHOUSES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Summer Wings (那年夏天)
250 Chashan Rd, Manjhou Township, Pingtung County (屏東縣滿洲鄉茶山路250號)
summer-wings.idv.tw
Tel: (08) 880-2172

La View (藍綠)
254 Chashan Rd, Manjhou Township, Pingtung County (屏東縣滿洲鄉茶山路254號)
Tel: 0935-998-155

A full list of guesthouses in the Jialeshui area can be viewed here (in Chinese only): uukt.idv.tw/uukt/live-d10.htm