

Scooter Taiwan!

Monday, March 13th

You know who picked up an international driver's license before he left and had a great idea for how to get around Taroko National Park for the day? It's me.



WE'RE SCOOTERING IN TAIWAN!



We awoke to mountains and coffee trees.

After a tasty breakfast, only somewhat poisonous to Christy, Boya dropped us off at the bus station. I had researched the night before and there was a place you could rent scooters for slightly less than the cost of two all day bus passes. Genius!

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Our ride for the day: 85cc's of pure, mountain climbing power!



Scooter negotiations.

We picked up our scooter and then were off into the park! Our first stop, a monument to those killed during construction of the road.



From a sign: The former director of the Highway Bureau Lin Ze-bin said this about the dangers faced by workers on the highway and his words are recorded on the Eternal Spring Shrine memorial stone: “There was a high risk of disaster for the men who built the highway and the chance of escape when an accident happened was minimal. The dead were buried by rocks, fell over cliffs to places where rescue was impossible, they were in vehicles that rolled over until they disintegrated or were killed by flying rocks. The brains and innards of the dead were scattered across mountain ridges and their torsos and limbs fell into deep ravines. The sight of the bloodstained mountains and rivers was so horrific it scared even the birds and the monkeys. We are deeply saddened that these heroic men didn’t come back and grieve the loss of the professional technicians.....”

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Christy on Bridge

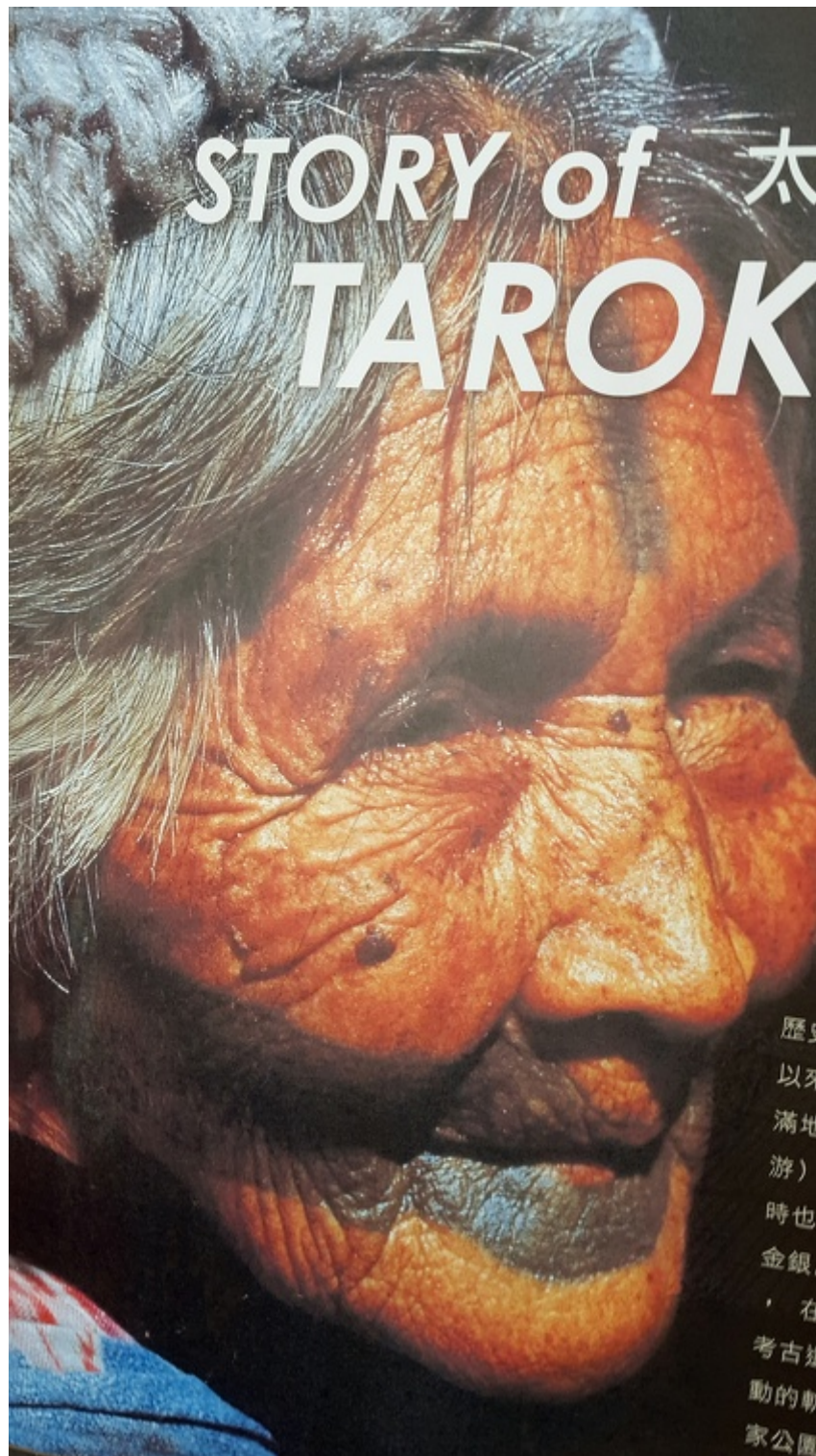


Eternal Spring Shrine

The memorial was at the entrance to the trail, and that was as far as we got. The main trail was closed, as were several others we would attempt. Normal construction work during the off season? No idea, we still had plenty to see!



Boya had told us the night before of the local aboriginal belief that diamond shaped decorations represent our ancestor's watching over us (both protecting and incentivizing us not to do anything we don't want them to witness!).



Traditional Taroko Women's Tattoo

When women passed their coming of age test, they were given a mask-style tattoo. When the Japanese were occupying Taiwan and doing their usual anti-native-culture bit, such tattoos were banned. So a generation or two didn't get them. I asked if the practice had resumed and Boya said no, getting the tattoo is incredibly painful, he couldn't see people doing it again.



Old Infrastructure in Taroko National Park

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We're in Taroko National Park!



Tunnel of Nine Turns. I think. Don't quote me on that. One of the "hard hat" areas. Fortunately we had motorcycle helmets!

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Jeeves reporting for duty.

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I also have about two hundred pictures of pretty rock. This is going to be a long post.

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The canyons are steep here.



Closed

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Things both cool and terrifying.



Christy enjoys the view.

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Seems legit.



Bonus warnings once you're on the bridge.

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Not Leaning!

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The view from the bridge is nice, though!

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Christy probably in another “do not linger” location.

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No climactic battles on these cliffs!



Where's the monkey?! In the upper-left. About half a dozen were in the trees here. Fun! Another helpful tip from Boya: stay away from the monkeys.

After our excitement with the monkeys we stopped in the small tourist town of Tienhsiang for lunch, hanging out with a neighborhood dog and puppy and doing our usual “anything we can eat?” routine. We’d reached the end of the main tourist area of the park, although the park itself continues on for quite some time. From here we walked across some bridges to a temple in the hills and then scootered up the road another mile to our final hike.

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Hsiang-Te Temple

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Pagoda in the mist.

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It's a Buddhist temple.

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Dragons and Pearl.



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Tunnel to Baiyang Waterfall Trail. Cell phone flashlights! Whose charge is not at all used up by having taken hundreds of pictures all day long...



Don't do this.

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Warning: Don't be here.



Rockfall!!

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Christy does not linger!



Caution for rockfalls.



Baiyang Waterfall Trail

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It just all looks like this.

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Baiyang Waterfall!



Bridge to Baiyang Waterfall viewing platform.

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I'm totally not making any gorgeous puns.

We had a wonderful day exploring the park and the scooter worked out great! We made it back just as the sun was going down and it was beginning to drizzle. We had considered scootering to Hualien but the headlight was like a candle behind a scratched piece of glass and I had no desire to drive through the rain and dark like that. Turns out all that hiking tired us out a bit so once we got off the bike we pretty much went comatose.

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We can sum up our day hiking in Taroko National Park: we had a very happy time.