

Reflections from My Trip to Alishan

by Dr Ng Liling

Earlier this year in April, I made plans to do a Sakura viewing trip with my sister. We decided to go to Alishan, Taiwan to get away from the crowds in Japan. It was our first time going to Alishan. We took a coach from Taichung to Alishan Nature Reserve. The journey took us about three hours. It was a winding road up to our destination – definitely not for those with a weak stomach!



Map of Alishan trail

An interesting tidbit is that Alishan was originally settled by the Tsou Taiwanese aborigines. Ethnic Han Chinese settlers later moved into the mountains in the late 18th century, resulting in many armed clashes between the settlers and aborigines. Sakura trees were not native to Alishan but were brought in by the Japanese based in Alishan. They missed their home country so much that they imported Yoshino cherry blossom saplings and planted them in Alishan. The pink and white cherry blossoms brought much colour to the background of green and brown in Alishan.



Cherry blossom in Alishan, Taiwan

What amazed me was the number of huge cypresses, yellow cedar, and spruce trees that were native to Alishan. One of the largest trees was 2,000 years old and measured 13.1 m at its trunk circumference. Awe emanated from this majestic tree with the surrounding mists adding a sense of mystery.



Alishan Sacred Tree

As we walked along the trail, we came across a peculiar sight, which was a tree made up of three parts. This “3-generation tree” or 三代木 was actually three generations of trees that had grown on top of another. Although the first and second generations of trees are dead, they serve as a strong and solid base for the third generation to grow and flourish.

We were only able to cover a short section of the trail in the two hours that we were there. We ended our trip by taking a ride on the famous Alishan Railway Train. If you ever visit Taiwan, I would highly recommend taking a trip to Alishan!



Dr Ng Liling and the 3-generation tree in Alishan, Taiwan

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