

Kinmen reopens Jiangong Islet to public

Taipei, Feb. 26 (CNA) Large numbers of tourists have visited Jiangong Islet in Kinmen County since it was recently re-opened to the public, and its rich ecosystem amazes visitors as they walk the stone path in the islet's intertidal zone.

Chen Mei-ling (陳美齡), head of the tourism department of the offshore county, said Chinese-English bilingual tourist information is now available to visitors, while new wooden platforms, viewing decks and seashore trails have been built on the islet to provide more comprehensive services to visitors after it was reopened to the public in late January following reconstruction from Dec. 20 last year.

The islet, located at the mouth of the Wu River in Jincheng Township and originally named Chu Islet, is 500 meters away from the Kinmen Island and covers 500 square meters.

In 1949, it was taken by the Republic of China armed forces, which built stronghold W038 on it in the face of Chinese attacks from the other side of the Taiwan Strait, at a time when the two sides were still at war after the ROC government retreated to Taiwan.

It was given the name of Jiangong Islet in 1960 and remained under the control of the ROC military until 1997, when the troops were all withdrawn as part of a military streamlining program.

Since then, the islet gradually became dilapidated through lack of care until 2002, when the county government took it over and started repairs in the area with the aim of turning it into a tourist attraction.

In addition to erecting a nine-meter-high stone statue of Cheng Cheng-kong (鄭成功), a Ming Dynasty hero who led resistance against Manchurian invaders, a pathway of stone slabs has been laid, making it accessible for visitors at low tide and separating the surrounding water into two parts.

On each side of the pathway stand two six-meter-high iron statues of local oyster farmers wearing bamboo leaf hats, an impressive scene that has become a popular location among tourists.

In the intertidal mudflat zone, visitors can also see a vast oyster field and a variety of sea creatures, including horseshoe crabs -- sometimes described as prehistorical living fossils -- fish, shellfish, and shrimp.

(By Huang Hui-min and Flor Wang)

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