



XIAMEN, CHINA

Gulangyu Island



Fly with Batik Air to Xiamen,
China 4x weekly

A weekend in Xiamen

Xiamen is a city that knows how to set the stage. Its allure? The perfect mix of urban energy and laid-back vibes. Skyscrapers rise beside tree-lined boulevards, bustling markets sit minutes away from quiet island retreats, and cafe-filled art districts pulse with creativity, all set against a breezy coastal backdrop.

That same balance of charm and sophistication is reflected in an unexpected way. Xiamen has become a billion-dollar wedding photography destination. Along its picturesque shores, brides in flowing gowns strike elegant poses against European-style

architecture, their veils catching the South China Sea breeze as cameras click in perfect rhythm. Each year, thousands of couples flock here for their pre-wedding photoshoots, drawn to its stunning backdrops of beaches and timeless architecture.

Beyond its romantic appeal, Xiamen is a city where history, art, and nature intersect. It is one of China's cleanest and most organised cities, seamlessly blending urban vibrancy with natural beauty.

With China's new visa-free entry policy, a weekend in Xiamen is now effortless, offering a laissez-faire escape where culture, coastal charm, and creativity unfold beyond the usual travel expectations.

Gulangyu Island

A ten-minute ferry ride from the mainland brings you to Gulangyu Island, a UNESCO Heritage site, a pedestrian-only island. From the world's largest piano museum to peaceful colonial mansions, knobby banyan trees and cobbled alleyways, Gulangyu offers a unique journey through China's past.

Nicknamed Piano Island, Gulangyu may be small at just two square kilometers, but it has a rich musical heritage and the highest per capita ownership of pianos in China. Once a retreat for European diplomats and traders, Gulangyu's streets are now a showcase of colonial consulates and

traditional Fujian-style homes, a rare blend that naturally evolved over time.

Music is the way of life here. As you wander around the island, you might hear a faint melody from an open window or stumble upon an impromptu performance in one of the island's hidden courtyards.

The island is best experienced in the early hours before the day-trippers arrive. As the sun rises, the island wakes up with a slow, dreamlike quality. The aroma of fresh pastries fills the air from small bakeries, street musicians play in shaded corners, and locals enjoy morning tea in quiet cafes tucked away behind ivy-covered walls, giving Gulangyu Island its distinct charm. It is a great place to walk around and feel the older type of China in the midst of such a modern boom.

Baicheng Beach

Baicheng Beach, near Xiamen University, is a lively coastal stretch popular with students and locals. Beyond its golden sands and relaxed atmosphere, Baicheng Beach is a favourite setting for pre-wedding photoshoots. Couples in extravagant gowns and sharp tuxedos stand against the backdrop of the ocean and golden sands, creating a striking contrast and a unique charm to the laid-back beach atmosphere. Photographers adjust veils, frame the perfect shot, and turn the shoreline into a stage.

As the sun dips toward the horizon, Baicheng Beach transforms into one of Xiamen's best spots to watch the sunset. The golden light reflecting on the waves creates a stunning scene, drawing in evening visitors. For those wanting to extend their time by the sea, small seafood stalls offer fresh grilled fish and local specialties, making it easy to soak in the moment a little longer.



Shu Zhuang Garden



Wuyuanwan Natural Park



Baicheng Beach

Wuyuanwan Bay Wetland Park

A hidden gem in Xiamen, Wuyuanwan Wetland Park is the city's largest eco-park and a peaceful retreat from the urban rush. Spanning 85 hectares, it is a haven for birdwatchers, especially in March, when hundreds of egrets arrive to nest. The wetlands, opening up to Wuyuan Bay, feature scenic water views, lush greenery, and a tranquil atmosphere. Below the wooden pathways, beds of lotus flowers add to the park's natural beauty, creating a calm and picturesque escape.

Take a quiet stroll, watch the birds, or simply soak in the serenity. Wuyuanwan Wetland Park is one of Xiamen's best-kept secrets, perfect for those seeking a peaceful break from the city.

Xiamen's Cycling Skyway

To explore Xiamen from a different perspective, hop on a bike and take to the Xiamen Cycling Skyway, the world's longest elevated cycling path. This 7.6 kilometer track runs five meters above ground, offering a smooth ride with views of the city, green spaces, and local life below. Adding this refreshing route to your itinerary offers a scenic alternative to traditional sightseeing.

Those looking for a coastal ride can take on Huandao Road, a scenic route with breathtaking ocean views and a relaxed pace along the shore.

The Shapowei Art Zone

Beyond the postcard-perfect charm of Gulangyu, Xiamen has a gritty, creative side pulsing with energy. The Shapowei Art Zone, once a quiet fishing village, has evolved into the city's underground arts and youth culture hub. Here, street art sprawls across walls, cafes double as art studios, and old warehouses thrum with live music.

It is a place that thrives on unfiltered creativity - home to artist studios, indie boutiques, a skate park, and a community that celebrates self-expression. A typical afternoon? Sipping a pour-over coffee or craft beer by the harbour, watching skaters pull off daring tricks, or wandering through wharf-side art studios and handcrafted stores. It is Xiamen's alternative side, where creativity flourishes beyond the traditional sights.

Xiamen University

Xiamen University is more than an academic institution, it is a destination in itself. Widely regarded as one of China's most beautiful campuses, it features serene lakes, historic architecture, and tree-lined pathways perfect for a stroll. In summer, blooming phoenix flowers add to its charm.

Nearby, Furong Tunnel has transformed from a simple passageway into a dynamic canvas of murals and street art, where students and visitors leave their creative mark.

A taste of Xiamen

Xiamen's coastal location means one thing - fresh seafood is always on the menu. From sizzling oyster omelettes to fragrant bowls of Shacha noodles, the city's cuisine is simple, bold, and packed with flavour.

No visit is complete without a bowl of Shacha noodles, a local favourite featuring silky strands soaked in a rich, peanut-infused broth. The secret? The Shacha sauce itself, Xiamen's signature umami-packed ingredient that keeps both locals and visitors coming back for more.



Shacha Noodles



Yuanboyuan



Oyster Omelette



Image credit Fonifrd

Why Xiamen is the perfect weekend destination

While much of China moves at a relentless pace, a weekend away in Xiamen unfolds its own rhythm. Mornings here start with a quiet bike ride under banyan trees, not a race through crowded streets. Ocean breezes replace the honking of traffic, and unhurried conversations in hidden cafes stretch into the afternoon. In Xiamen, there is no pressure to check off landmarks, just the quiet joy of letting the city unfold, one effortless moment at a time.



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