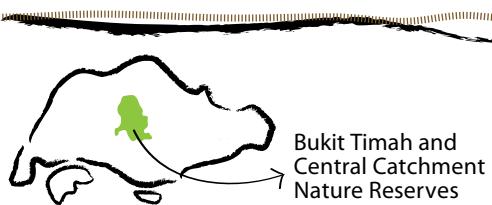


A Guide to Walking Trail at the TreeTop Walk

This trail takes you to the TreeTop Walk, a 250m-long freestanding suspension bridge between the two highest points in the Central Catchment Nature Reserve (MacRitchie) and the first of its kind in Singapore. From the suspension bridge, you can delight in having a bird's eye view of the forest canopy and try to spot different wildlife in their natural habitat. You can also enjoy panoramic views of the verdant greenery of the Central Catchment Nature Reserve and the placid waters of the Upper Peirce Reservoir.



Bukit Timah and Central Catchment Nature Reserves

Singapore's very own Bukit Timah and Central Catchment Nature Reserves are home to more than 1000 species of flowering plants and over 500 species of animals. These include towering trees, climbing palms (better known as rattans), ferns, orchids, gingers and wonderful blooms such as the Bat Lily.



The terrain for this trail is undulating with steep slopes at certain points. Do ensure that you are suitably attired in proper footwear like track shoes or sneakers.

This trail is not suitable for pregnant ladies, young children and the disabled. People with a fear of heights or who have a pre-existing heart condition should also not attempt this trail. Dogs and other pets are not allowed on this trail too.

The trail is designed for visitors to walk in one direction especially while on the bridge. Do follow the direction of flow. For your safety, please do not run or jump on the structure.

In the event of lightning, thunder storms or heavy rain, please follow the instructions of the duty personnel and exit the structure immediately.

Help protect our natural heritage by not removing plants and animals from the forest.

In the event of an emergency, please seek help from the duty personnel at site or call 1800-4717300.

Opening hours:

Weekdays: 9:00am to 5:00pm
Weekends & PHs: 8:30am to 5:00pm
Closed on Mondays (except public holidays)
Last entry at 4:45pm

Estimated average walking time:
Between 2 to 3 hours

Distance: About 6km (round trip including the TreeTop Walk)

Level of difficulty: Moderate to difficult





A Guide to Walking Trail at the TreeTop Walk

Highlights

- Bird's eye view of the forest with its large and tall forest trees that rise above the canopy
- A close encounter with interesting trees and plants along the trail
- Sights of native creatures of the forest like the Clouded Monitor Lizard, Common Sun Skink, Plantain Squirrel and Long-tailed Macaque
- Occasional glimpses of native birds like the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Striped Tit-Babbler and Olive-winged Bulbul.

How to get to this walking trail

By Car:

Park at the public car park at Venus Drive that is located beside the start of the trail.

By Bus:

Take bus number 52, 132, 163, 166, 167, 855 and 980 and alight just outside ESSO station before the junction of Venus Drive, Upper Thomson Road and Sin Ming Avenue.



Ranger Station



Shelter



Refreshment



Toilet



Public Phone



Fitness Corner



Fishing Area



Car Park



Bus Stop



Boardwalk



No Entry



Mapboard

A Guide to Walking Trail at the TreeTop Walk



→ 1

Signs of a former kampung

From Venus Drive, walk on the shaded footpath in the direction of Bukit Kalang Service Reservoir. Along this section of the trail, some of the common plants you will come across are coconut palms and cordylines (*Cordyline fruticosa*) – sun-loving plants with red leaves and edible roots. Rattans are another common sight. Look up and try to see them hanging over the tree branches. These unique palms do not stand unaided on their own trunks, unlike most other palm species. Instead, they grow taller and longer by climbing around and over adjacent trees. Watch out for the sharp spikes at the base of the rattans that can hook careless trekkers.

The presence of these plant species, together with others such as heliconias, African Tulips and rubber trees, strongly suggests that this area used to house a former traditional village which is also known as a kampung .

Long-tailed Macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*)

Long-tailed macaques are a common sight. Observe their movements and behaviour in their natural habitat, but do not feed them as this would disrupt their feeding pattern and adversely alter their behaviour. If you are observant, you might sometimes notice some birds flying around the monkeys as they move through the forest. These birds are often the Greater Racket-tailed Drongos and they cleverly pick up insects and other food titbits that are stirred up when the monkeys rustle the vegetation.

→ 2

Signs of forest regeneration

As you continue on this trail, look out for signs of forest regeneration. The presence of fishtail palms of a healthy size is a good indication that the forest is regenerating. As you enter the forest further along the trail, look out too for lianas which are climbers with long and twisty vines snaking their way around the trees and up towards the canopy by winding their strong and flexible stems around small clusters of trees. The size and presence of lianas often also help to provide an indication of the health and age of the rainforest. Similarly, the presence of lichens which appear like white round spots on tree trunks are a good indication of the air quality in the forest. The more numerous and the bigger the lichens, the better the rainforest is with regard to the quality of air.

→ 3

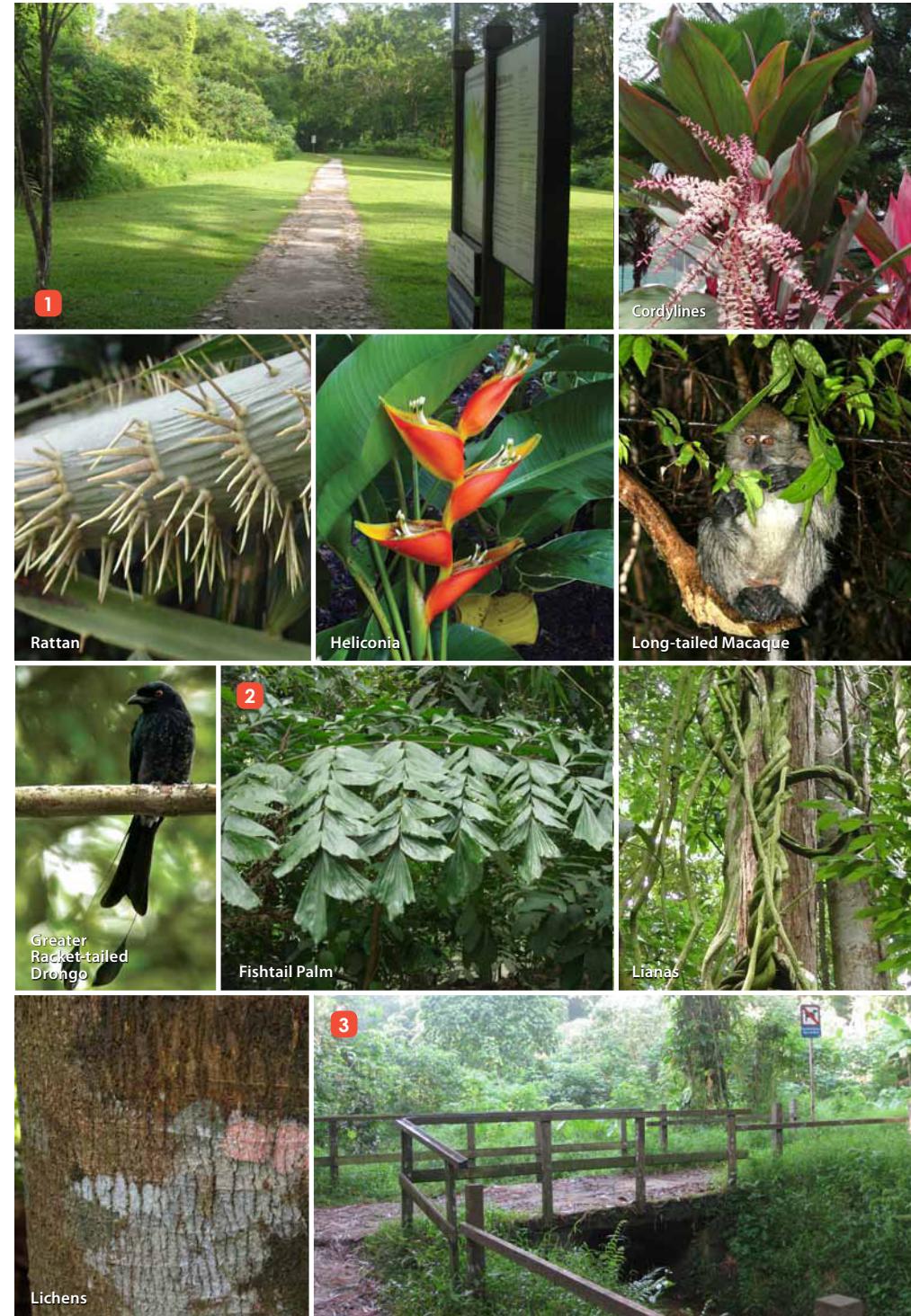
Getting to the TreeTop Walk

As you continue to walk along the trail, you will reach a junction with a bridge. Cross the bridge to get to the trail located to your right. This trail will take you to the TreeTop Walk. The path on the left however will lead you back onto Venus Loop.

→ 4

Flora at Peirce Track

You will notice that this trail is lined with several logs from trees that had fallen many years ago. These logs are good examples to illustrate that many tropical forest trees are commonly composed of dense hardwood that takes a long time to break



A Guide to Walking Trail at the TreeTop Walk



down. If you examine the surface of these logs closely, you will likely see bracket fungus growing on the logs. Fungi have a vital role to play in the rainforest ecosystem: they help to break down dead plant matter and return the organic matter back to the forest floor.

Look out for interesting plant species like the Simpoh Air (*Dillenia suffruticosa*), Mahang Plant (*Macaranga bancana*) and the Elephant Ear Tree (*Macaranga gigantea*). Fruits from the Simpoh Air are eaten by birds. The flowers, which are yellow, start to open at about 3am and drop off towards the end of the day. Interestingly, its flowers are pollinated only by carpenter bees. This is not the only unique relationship between flora and fauna: the Mahang Plant has a symbiotic relationship with a species of ants. The plant produces sweet secretions as food and provides shelter in its hollow stem for these ants. The ants will in turn protect the plant from caterpillar attack. Insects like the carpenter bees and ants may seem insignificant, if not irksome to some, but in the ecosystem, they play important roles. Therefore, when visiting the nature reserves, be mindful not to spray insect repellent within the nature reserves, but rather before entering them. The Elephant Ear Tree (*Macaranga gigantea*), from the same family as the Ant Plant, is hard to miss. Its distinctive leaves are as huge as an elephant's ear, hence its common name. Its fruits are food for birds. This tree can be found throughout the trail and can also be found at the end of the suspension bridge at the TreeTop Walk.

→ 5

TreeTop Walk

Before making your way across the TreeTop Walk that lies ahead of the Ranger Station, do stop at the TreeTop Walk signboard to read for more information on how this suspension bridge was constructed in a sustainable way.

Enjoy a bird's eye view of the forest from the suspension bridge, which is on the same level as that of the forest canopy. Observe the different layers of the forest – emergent, canopy, tree, shrub and ground layers. At the emergent layer which features the uppermost strata of a tropical rainforest, look out for large and tall forest trees that rise above the canopy like the Medang (*Litsea elliptica*) and Pulai (*Alstonia angustiloba*). Try to see if you can spot trees that make up the canopy and tree layers, fighting for the valuable spaces to reach the sun. The Terentang, a sun-loving tree, fills in the gaps in the spaces between other trees. When you return to the same layer as the shrub and ground layers further up the trail, do take some time to observe how the many different tree roots intertwine with one another on the forest floor.

Flora

Linger at the TreeTop Walk and see if you can spot interesting tree species. In particular, do look out for a tree with orange, velvety leaves on the right side of the TreeTop Walk. This is the Rusty Oil Fruit (*Elaeocarpus ferrugineus*). Freshly emerged leaves are ruby red and these leaves gradually turn a rusty



orange before they eventually become green. Its fruits are much sought after by birds like the Pink-necked Pigeon. Another tree to look out for is the Cheng Tng Tree (*Scaphium macropodum*). This tree obtains its name from its seeds that contain brown, spongy fibres. These fibres, which expand when soaked in water, are used in the local dessert Cheng Tng.

Birds

To date, more than 100 species of birds have been observed from the TreeTop Walk. Come early in the morning if you want to catch sight of these birds. Look out for native forest birds like the Crimson Sunbird, Olive-winged Bulbul, Striped Tit-Babbler, Banded Woodpecker and the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo. Of interest, the Drongo is a good mimicker of the calls of many birds; do not be deceived by its calls!

A Guide to Walking Trail at the TreeTop Walk

After traversing the TreeTop Walk

There are interesting plant species you can look out for as you walk up the flight of stairs after crossing the suspension bridge. Try to spot the Wild Torch Ginger with its long underground stems (rhizomes), as well as the Calophyllum species that is of the same plant family as that of the Mangosteen. You can identify this tree from the distinctive markings of parallel lines on its bark.

Rest stops

There are a number of small sheltered huts where you can stop to rest and enjoy the surrounding forest. While the forest may appear peaceful and quiet, there is actually a diverse range of wildlife around like Clouded Monitor Lizards, Plantain Squirrels, giant forest ants and butterflies that will appear to the person with observant eyes. You might also be able to catch sight of shiny skinks that belong to the lizard family basking in the sun. Skinks are commonly seen and they include species such as the Common Sun Skink. Animals that are present but less often seen include the Pangolin, the Malayan Colugo and the Spiny Hill Terrapin.

At Tampinis Hut, remain quiet and see if you can spot animals like monkeys up in the trees. Behind Medang Hut, look out for the Chempedek (*Artocarpus integer*). Its flowers are pollinated by a type of midge that is drawn to the scent given off by the fungus that lives on the male flowers. Pick up a dried leaf and feel its underside. Wiry hairs along the midrib of the leaf give it a unique "velcro" property! Remember to return the leaf back to the ground as every single leaf, branch and organic



matter have important roles in the survival of our forests.

The Terantang Hut and Macaranga Hut are the two other rest stops on this trail.

→ 6

Tiny Wetland Habitat

After you cross the pipeline, you may be able to spot a wild durian tree or two on this portion of the trail. The wild durian (*Durio singaporesis*) contains very little flesh, unlike the commercial durians we eat. The wild durian shares similar characteristics as the King of Fruits, especially the shimmery pale underside of the leaves and the thorns on the fruit. After you spot the King of Fruits, you will eventually reach a bridge with a small stream running underneath it. This stream serves as a tiny wetland habitat for wildlife such as dragonflies and other aquatic life. Dragonfly nymphs are known to feed on mosquito larvae in the stream.

→ 7

Sime Track

The path that leads you out of the forest is known as Sime Track. This track will take you past the fourth rest stop from Terantang Hut to the Ranger Station. From the Ranger Station, embark on the last leg of your journey and head back to return to Venus Drive.

We hope you have enjoyed your walk on this trail. For another intimate encounter with flora and fauna, embark on Prunus Trail or Chemperai Trail at The MacRitchie Boardwalks. To obtain another DIY trail-guide on a walking trail in one of Singapore's parks, visit www.nparks.gov.sg/eguides.



Clouded Monitor Lizard



Torch Ginger Flower



Malayan Colugo



Pangolin



Common Sun Skink



Giant forest ants



6



7



The present forest reserves in Singapore cover only five percent of Singapore's land area but house over 50 percent of our remaining native biodiversity. Hence, ensuring the survival of our forest reserves is paramount to protecting our natural heritage. A simple case in point is the freshwater crab species. There are six known freshwater crab species in Singapore, of which three are unique only to the city. All these three freshwater crab species can only be found in the nature reserves. The role of protection and nature conservation does not just lie with the people managing the nature reserves but also everyone who uses the nature reserves. After all, we are the custodians of Singapore's natural heritage.