

A Guide to the TreeTop Walk Walking Trail



This trail takes you from Windsor Nature Park to 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 may delight in a bird's eye view of the forest canopy and 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 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 White Bat Lily (*Tacca integrifolia*).



The terrain of this trail is undulating with steep slopes at certain points. Do ensure that you are suitably attired with 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 a pre-existing heart condition should also not attempt this trail.

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

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

Dogs and other pets are not allowed on this trail or in the nature reserve in general. Help protect our natural heritage by not removing plants or animals from the forest.

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

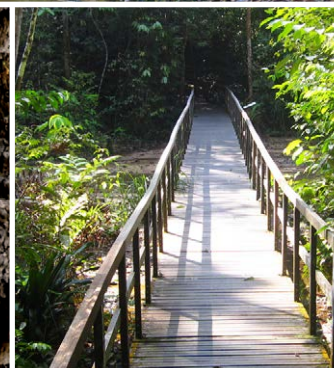
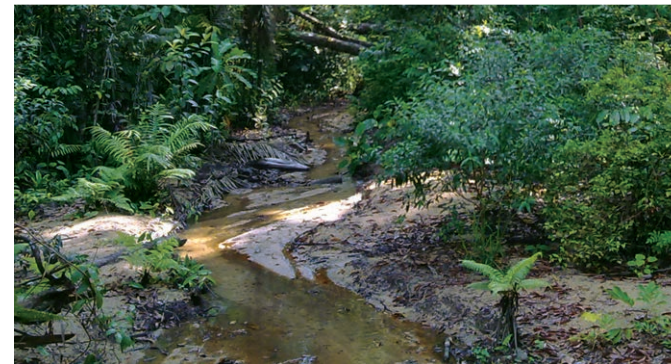
Opening hours:

Weekdays: 9am to 5pm
Weekends & PHs: 8.30am to 5pm
*Closed on Mondays (except PHs)
**Last entry at 4.45pm

Distance (round trip from Windsor Nature Park to TreeTop Walk and back): About 7km

Estimated walking time: 3 to 4 hours

Level of difficulty: Moderate to difficult



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Highlights

- Bird's-eye view of the forest with its tall and large forest trees that rise above the canopy
- A close encounter with interesting plants along the trail
- Sights of native creatures of the forest like the Clouded Monitor Lizard (*Varanus nebulosus*), Common Sun Skink (*Eutropis multifasciata*), and Plantain Squirrel (*Callosciurus notatus*)
- Glimpses of native birds like the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus paradiseus*), Pin-striped Tit-babbler (*Macronus gularis*), and Olive-winged Bulbul (*Pycnonotus plumosus*)

How to get to this walking trail

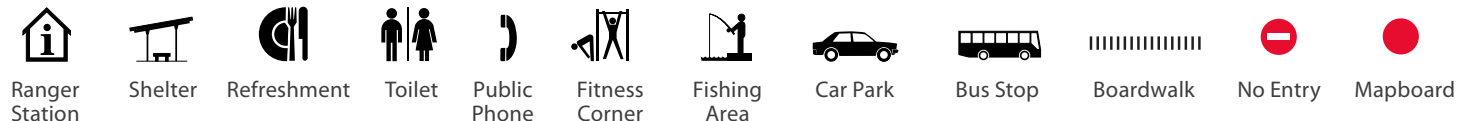
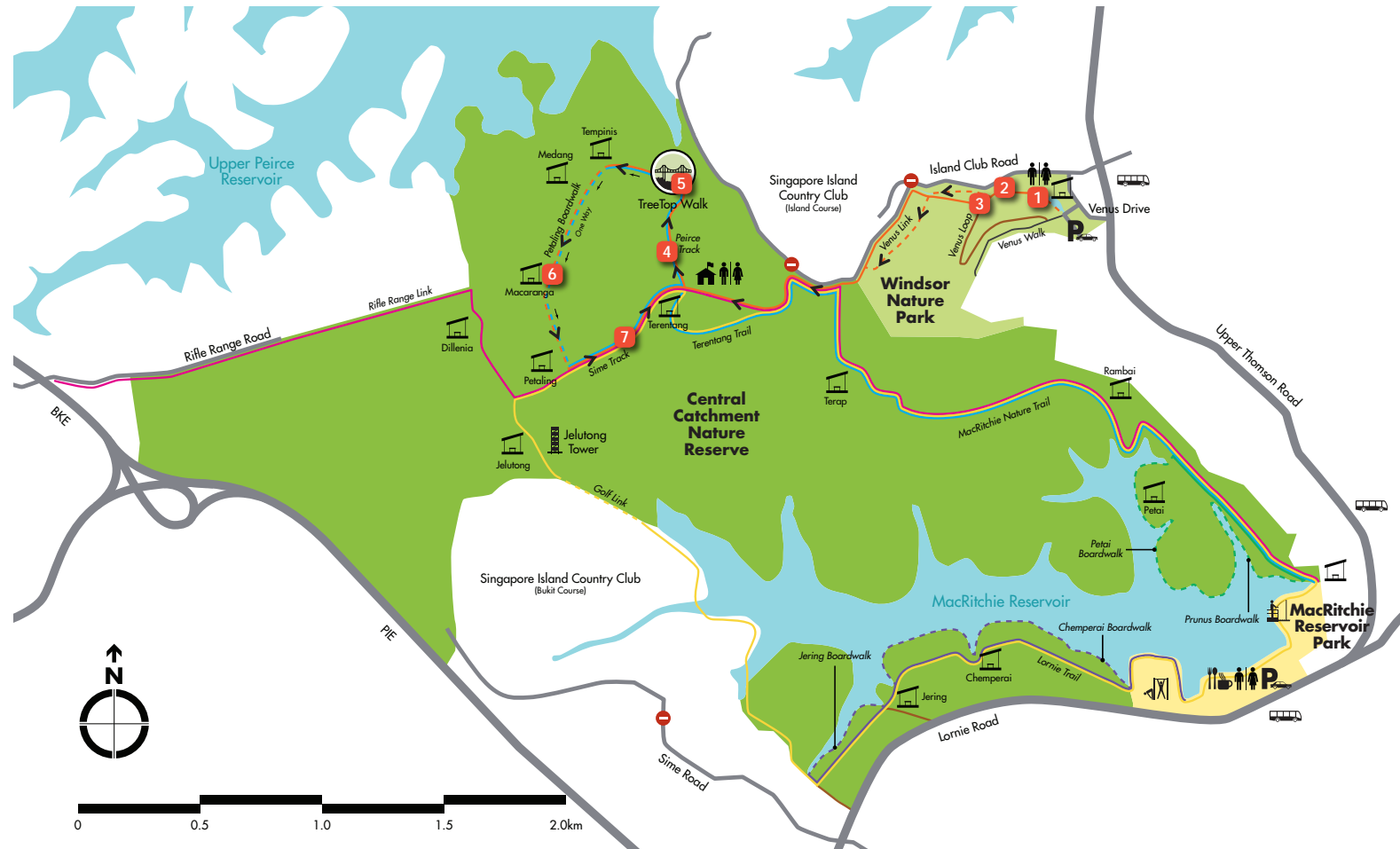
By Car:

Park at the Windsor Nature Park car park at Venus Drive (car park opening hours: 7am to 7pm daily).

By Bus:

Take bus 132, 163, 165, 166, 167, 855, or 980 and alight along Upper Thomson Road (Opp Flame Tree Pk, Bus stop ID: 53071; Flame Tree Pk, Bus stop ID: 53079).

Alternatively, take bus 52, 162, 162M, or 410 and alight at Sin Ming Ave (Blk 454, Bus stop ID: 53361; Opp Blk 454, Bus stop ID: 53369).



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→ 1

Signs of a former kampung

Upon entering Windsor Nature Park, begin your journey on Venus Loop in the direction of TreeTop Walk. Some of the common plants you will encounter here include Coconut Palms (*Cocos nucifera*) and Cordylines (*Cordyline fruticosa*) – sun-loving plants with red leaves and edible roots. Rattans are another common sight. These unique palms do not stand unaided on their own, unlike most other palm species. Instead, they grow taller by climbing around adjacent trees. Look up and try to spot them, but do watch out for their sharp spikes!

The presence of these plant species, coupled with that of others such as the African Tulip (*Spathodea campanulata*), Rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*), and Heliconia (*Heliconia sp.*), reveals that this area used to house a former traditional village, also known as a *kampung*.

Long-tailed Macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*)

Long-tailed Macaques are a common sight. Observe their movements in their natural habitat, but do not feed them as this will disrupt their feeding patterns and adversely alter their behaviour. If you are observant, you may notice some birds flying around the monkeys as they move through the forest. The Greater Racket-tailed Drongo cleverly picks up insects that are stirred up when the monkeys rustle the vegetation.

→ 2

Signs of forest regeneration

As you continue along this trail, look out for signs of forest regeneration. The presence of Fishtail Palms (*Caryota mitis*) of a healthy size is a good indicator that the forest is regenerating. Look out too for lianas, which are long-stemmed, woody climbers that are rooted in soil and that twine around trees, up towards the canopy in search of light. The presence of large lianas also signal the age and maturity of the forest. Similarly, lichens, which appear as white patches on tree trunks, serve as good indicators of the forest's air quality. The more numerous and the bigger the lichens, the better the air quality.

→ 3

Getting to TreeTop Walk

As you venture further into the trail, you will reach a junction. Cross the bridge to take the boardwalk route (Squirrel Trail and then Drongo Trail), or opt for the nature trail route by taking the path to your left (Venus Link). Either route will lead you to TreeTop Walk.

→ 4

Flora at Peirce Track

After making your way past Ranger Station, begin your ascent up Peirce Track to TreeTop Walk. You will notice that Peirce Track is lined with logs from trees that had fallen many years ago. These logs illustrate that many tropical forest trees are composed of hardwood, which takes a long time to decompose. If you examine the surface of these logs, you will likely see bracket fungi growing. Fungi play a vital role in the rainforest



Cordylines



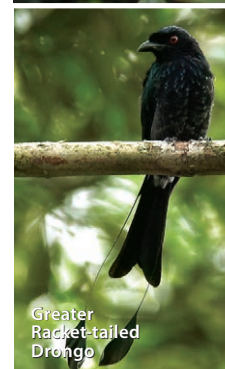
Rattan



Heliconia



Long-tailed Macaque



Greater Racket-tailed Drongo



Fishtail Palm



Lianas



Lichens



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ecosystem – they help to break down dead plant matter and return the organic matter to the forest floor, enriching the forest soil.

Look out for interesting plant species like the Simpoh Air (*Dillenia suffruticosa*), Common Mahang (*Macaranga bancana*), and Giant Mahang (*Macaranga gigantea*). The Simpoh Air's fruits are eaten by birds. Its yellow flowers start to open in the early morning and drop off towards the end of the day. They are pollinated by insects such as the Carpenter Bee (*Xylocopa sp.*), which interestingly carries out buzz pollination by grabbing onto the flowers and buzzing at a specific frequency, releasing pollen in the process. This is not the only unique relationship between flora and fauna; the Common Mahang shares a mutualistic relationship with a species of ants (*Crematogaster sp.*). The plant produces sweet secretions as food and provides shelter in its hollow stem for the ants. In return, the ants protect the plant from herbivores, insects, pathogenic fungi, and climbers. Insects like bees and ants may seem insignificant, but they play crucial roles in the forest ecosystem. As such, be mindful not to spray insect repellent within the nature reserve, but rather before entering it.

The Giant Mahang is hard to miss. It is also known as Elephant's Ears because of its distinctively large leaves. It can be found throughout the trail and also at the end of the TreeTop Walk suspension bridge.

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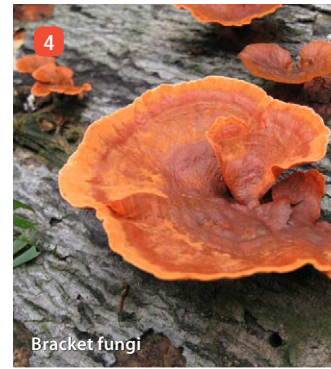
TreeTop Walk

Before making your way across TreeTop Walk, do stop at the TreeTop Walk signboard for more information on how this suspension bridge was constructed in a sustainable manner.

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

Flora

Linger at TreeTop Walk and see if you can spot interesting tree species. In particular, look out for a tree with orange, velvety leaves on the right side of TreeTop Walk. This is the Rusty Oil Fruit (*Elaeocarpus ferrugineus*). Newly emerged leaves are ruby red and gradually turn a rusty orange before eventually becoming green. Its fruits are much sought after by birds like the Pink-necked Green Pigeon (*Treron vernans*). Another tree to look out for is the Cheng Tng Tree (*Scaphium macropodium*). This tree obtains its name from its seeds, which contain brown, spongy fibres. These fibres,



Bracket fungi



Simpoh Air



Common Mahang



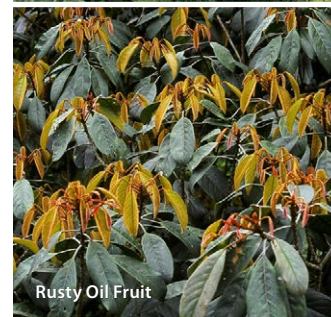
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Pulai



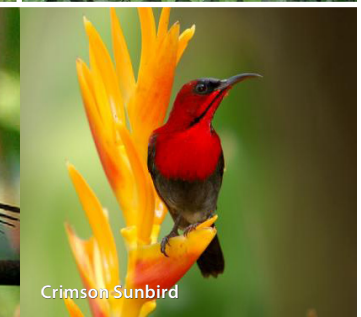
Cheng Tng Tree



Rusty Oil Fruit



Pin-striped Tit-babbler



Crimson Sunbird

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 TreeTop Walk. Come early in the morning if you would like to catch sight of these birds. Look out for native forest birds like the Crimson Sunbird (*Aethopyga siparaja*),

Olive-winged Bulbul, Pin-striped Tit-babbler, Banded Woodpecker (*Chrysophlegma miniaceum*), and the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo. The Drongo is a good mimicker of the calls of many birds; do not be deceived by its calls!

After traversing TreeTop Walk

As you walk up the flight of stairs past the suspension bridge onto Petaling Boardwalk, try to

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spot the Torch Ginger (*Etlingera elatior*) with its long underground stems (rhizomes), as well as *Calophyllum* trees which come from the same family as the Mangosteen (*Garcinia mangostana*). You can identify *Calophyllum* species by their oppositely arranged leaves that have numerous closely spaced parallel secondary veins. Many of them also have distinctive diamond- or boat-shaped fissures on the bark.

Rest stops

There are a number of huts where you can stop to rest and enjoy the surrounding forest. While the forest may appear peaceful, there is actually a great diversity of wildlife around, such as the Clouded Monitor Lizard, Plantain Squirrel, Giant Forest Ant (*Dinomyrmex gigas*), and butterflies. You may also be able to catch sight of shiny skinks, such as the Common Sun Skink. Skinks belong to the lizard family and are cold-blooded, which is why they are often seen basking in the sun. Animals that are present but less often seen include the Sunda Pangolin (*Manis javanica*), Malayan Colugo (*Galeopterus variegatus*), Spiny Hill Tortoise (*Heosemys spinosa*), and even the Lesser Mousedeer (*Tragulid kanchil*).

At Tempinis Hut, remain quiet and see if you can spot animals like the macaques up in the trees. Behind Medang Hut, look out for the *Cempedak* tree (*Artocarpus integer*). Its flowers are pollinated by a type of midge that is drawn to the scent produced by fungi living on the male flowers. Pick up a dried *Cempedak* leaf and feel its underside. Wiry hairs along the midrib of the leaf give it a unique “velcro” property, allowing it to stick to your

clothes! Remember to return the leaf to the ground so it can play its part in nutrient cycling.

Terantang Hut and Macaranga Hut are the two other rest stops along Petaling Boardwalk.

→ 6

Tiny Wetland Habitat

After you cross the pipeline and continue on the boardwalk, you may be able to spot a wild durian tree or two. Called the Singapore Durian (*Durio singaporensis*), this species is native to Singapore. Its fruits are thorny just like the commercial durians we eat (*Durio zibethinus*), but contain very little flesh. You will subsequently come to a bridge with a small stream running underneath it. This stream serves as a wetland habitat for dragonflies and other aquatic life.

→ 7

Sime Track

The trail that leads you out of the forest towards Ranger Station is called Sime Track. From Ranger Station, embark on the last leg of your journey and head back to Windsor Nature Park.

We hope you have enjoyed your walk on this trail. For more intimate encounters with our native wildlife, visit the MacRitchie boardwalks – Prunus, Petai, Chemperai, and Jering. 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



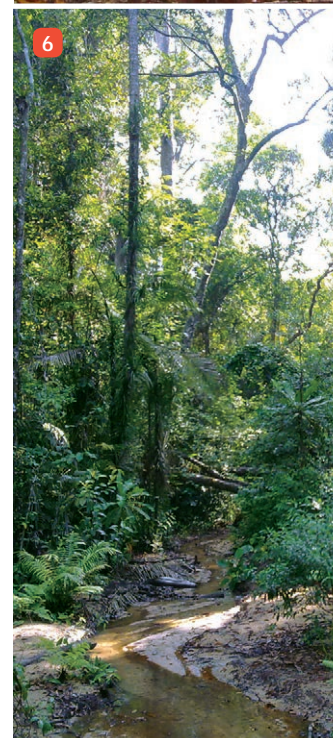
Sunda Pangolin



Common Sun Skink



Giant Forest Ants



The present nature 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 nature reserves is paramount in the protection of our natural heritage. A simple case in point is the freshwater crab. There are six known freshwater crab species in Singapore, of which three are endemic (unique to Singapore) and only found in our nature reserves. The role of safeguarding and conserving our biodiversity 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.