

BUKIT TIMAH NATURE RESERVE →

A RESPITE FROM CITY LIVING  
LOCATION: SINGAPORE  
LEVEL: EASY TO MODERATE ↘

After days of pounding the pavement of Orchard Road, Singapore's main shopping thoroughfare, it's a breath of fresh air to explore the city's nature by taking a trip to Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. Sitting upon the slopes of Bukit Timah Hill, Singapore's highest point at 163 meters, this tropical rainforest at the heart of the tiny island state is home to hundreds of flowering plants and animal species. In fact, there are more species of trees here than in North America! First, drop by the Visitor Centre where you can view photos and elaborate displays of the different species you will encounter. Then, choose from five different trails of varying difficulties. The easy trails will take you about 30 to 45 minutes to finish, while the more challenging ones could take up to two hours. Along the way, be prepared to see long-tailed macaques or monkeys (Don't try to feed them!), squirrels, lizards, colorful butterflies, and a variety of birds. The trails are well marked to help you identify the plants you will pass. You can also explore the area by cycling through the mountain biking trail, experience rock climbing, or try your luck at birdwatching.  
Best time to trek: All-year round  
Contact: Bukit Timah Visitor Centre, tel. 65

# TAKE A HIKE

EXPERIENCE NATURE'S BEAUTY ON FOOT AND HAVE THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME ON SIX OF ASIA'S BEST HIKING





← MT. PULAG

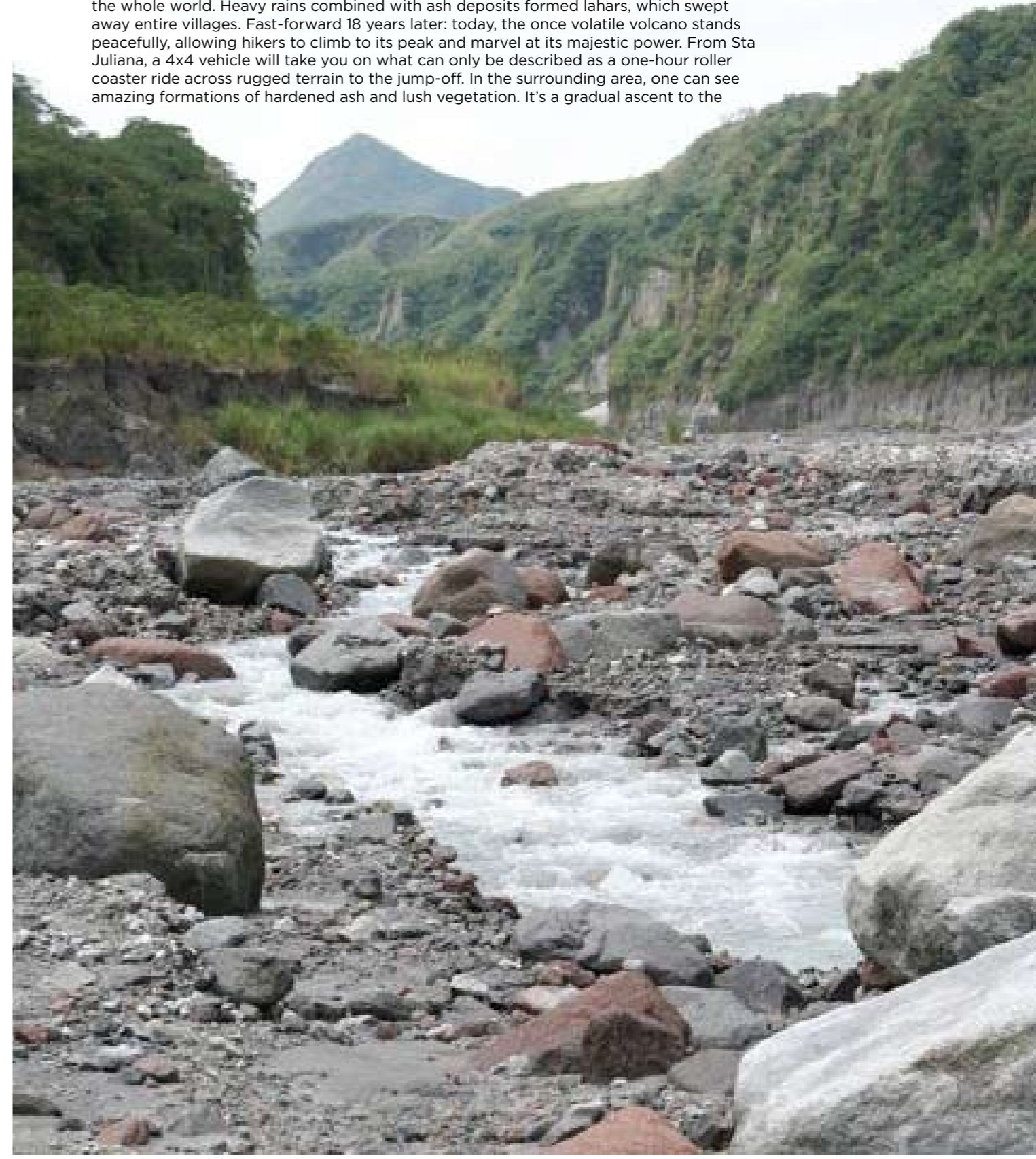
**A WORLD ABOVE THE CLOUDS**  
 LOCATION: BENGUET, IFUGAO, AND NUEVA VIZCAYA, PHILIPPINES  
 LEVEL: EASY TO MODERATE ⚡

Known as the rooftop of Luzon, Mt Pulag is the third highest mountain in the Philippines at 2,922m above sea level. A favorite among Filipino mountaineers, Pulag's cool, sometimes near-freezing weather is a refreshing break from the warm, tropical climate in Manila. The road trip from Manila to Pulag takes about 10 hours, but the views of the rice terraces and sheer mountain landscapes are worth the long, bumpy ride. There are several routes one can take depending on your available time and experience. The Ambangeg route is an established trail that will take you through a mossy forest, grasslands, and dwarf bamboo plants — perfect for beginners. The more challenging Akiki trail is a 10- to 12-hour hike which goes through farmlands, rivers, and steep slopes covered in pine trees. But the highlight of every trek is to climb to the summit before dawn to witness the sunrise from

MT. PINATUBO →

**A WET AND WILD ADVENTURE**  
 LOCATION: TARLAC, PHILIPPINES  
 LEVEL: MODERATE ⚡⚡

Filipinos born before 1991 remember the catastrophic eruption of Mt Pinatubo in June of that year. A massive cloud of gray ash and smoke covered the atmosphere and affected the whole world. Heavy rains combined with ash deposits formed lahars, which swept away entire villages. Fast-forward 18 years later: today, the once volatile volcano stands peacefully, allowing hikers to climb to its peak and marvel at its majestic power. From Sta Juliana, a 4x4 vehicle will take you on what can only be described as a one-hour roller coaster ride across rugged terrain to the jump-off. In the surrounding area, one can see amazing formations of hardened ash and lush vegetation. It's a gradual ascent to the



HONG KONG TRAIL →

**A HIDDEN OASIS**  
 LOCATION: HONG KONG ISLAND, HONG KONG SAR

LEVEL: EASY TO MODERATE ⚡

Unknown to many tourists who simply visit Hong Kong for Disneyland and shopping, the region is actually home to many spectacular walking trails. The Hong Kong Trail, which passes through five country parks on Hong Kong Island, is a 50km route divided into eight stages with varying degrees of difficulty. Well-marked and rarely crowded, the trail is a mix of cement hill paths, wide and narrow steps, and dirt roads. Aside from seeing breathtaking views and a variety of flora and fauna, the trail also allows you to catch a glimpse of Hong Kong's rich colonial past. Beginning at the Peak Tram Station on Lugard Road, the route weaves around Victoria Peak, the highest point on the island, where you will see a magnificent view of Victoria Harbor and Kowloon. When you get to stage eight, you'll find the Dragon's Back, a ridge top walk hailed by Time Magazine as Asia's best urban hike in 2004. Before hiking, make sure to get a map and familiarize yourself with the route. There are no campsites on the trail so instead of taking on all eight stages at once, just choose the paths that are most appealing to you.





**GUNUNG RINJANI** →

## PILGRIMAGE TO A HOLY SITE

**LOCATION: LOMBOK ISLAND, INDONESIA**

**LEVEL: MODERATE TO ADVANCED** ⚡⚡⚡

Standing at 3,726m above sea level, Gunung Rinjani is Indonesia's second highest volcano located at the northern part of Lombok Island, just east of Bali. For the people of Sasak, Bali, and Lombok, this active volcano (the most recent eruption took place in October 2004) is considered the home of the gods and its waters are said to have healing powers. Near the top of the mountain is an oval-shaped caldera holding the crescent-shaped lake Segara Anak, meaning "Child of the Sea." Eruptions in the 1990s formed a smaller mountain called Gunung Baru or "New Mountain" located at the edge of the lake. There are many routes to trek in Rinjani, depending on how fit you are, how much time you have, and what you want to see. The most common route is via the village of Senaru, which will take you directly to the crater lake. But for more advanced trekkers who want to experience the arduous climb to Rinjani's summit, take the Sembalun Lawang route. After the trek, you can visit one of the three famous caves (Goa Susu, Goa Payung, Dan Goa Manik) take

a dip in the healing hot springs of Aik Kalak, or get a taste of local culture by visiting nearby traditional villages.

Best time to trek: During the dry months — from April to November

How to get there: Cebu Pacific flies to Jakarta from Manila three times a week. From Jakarta, take a domestic flight to Mataram Selaparang Airport. Hire local transportation or a private vehicle to take you to Senaru or Sembalun Lawang village. Most package tours make transportation arrangements to take you to the jump off, depending on your route.

*Contact: For information on tour itineraries, log on to [www.rinjaninationalpark.com](http://www.rinjaninationalpark.com), [www.lombok-network.com/rinjani/](http://www.lombok-network.com/rinjani/) or [www.orangutan.lombok-lintrack.com/rinjani-national-park.htm](http://www.orangutan.lombok-lintrack.com/rinjani-national-park.htm) ■*



### HOW TO GET THERE

Cebu Pacific flies to Puerto Princesa from across a growing domestic network. Visit [www.cebupacificair.com](http://www.cebupacificair.com)

## FOR FIRST-TIME TREKKERS...

Hiking is a challenging yet rewarding experience. Keep these tips in mind and you're all set to conquer your first trail!

- **Physical preparation is key.** Start training at least a month before the actual climb (or more if it's a difficult one). Suggested exercises are jogging, stair climbing (try carrying your backpack and load it with 1.5 to 4 liters of bottled water to simulate carrying a heavy load during the hike), and lunges to strengthen your leg muscles.
- **Invest in good hiking shoes.** Pick a pair that is lightweight and has enough traction to keep you from falling when the trail is slippery. Suggested brands: The North Face, Merrel, Salomon, and Columbia.
- **Dress appropriately.** Slip on a dri-fit shirt, sports bra or a two-piece swimsuit as underwear for the ladies, and trekking pants or leggings with shorts. Don't forget