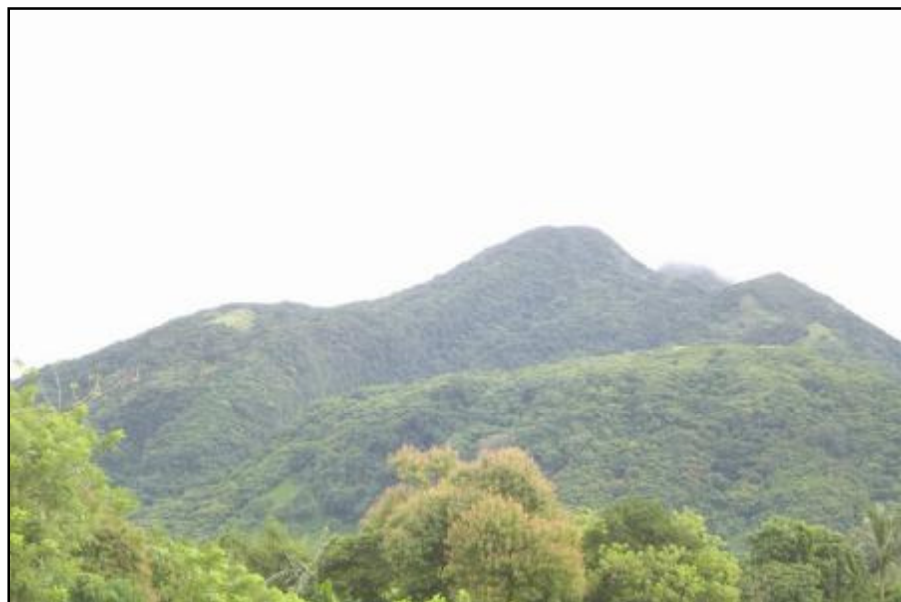




DAHONPALAY MOUNTAINEERS



MT. MAKILING TRAVERSE

LOCATION:	Laguna Province
ELEVATION:	1090 meters above sea level
LEVEL:	Major Climb, Level III, Strenuous
JUMP-OFF POINTS	Sto Tomas Batangas
ESTIMATED BUDGET	P 400 (Tentative)
IT CREATED BY:	J. Tanega (Thanks to L. Henson MMS and Pinoy Mountaineer)



INFORMATION:

The legendary, Mt. Makiling, one of the most, if not the most famous mountain in Luzon, has inspired a number of poets, writers and lyricist for a long time. It is a perfect site for hiking even for first timers since trails are from easy to moderate. The place also has picnic grounds where you can camp and enjoy nature with your family even for non-hikers and unfit individuals since vehicles can climb up to this area. Found in the locality of the famous Los Baños Hot Springs and is home to the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), Mt. Makiling has three known trails. The first trail, the most popular and frequently used, is the UPLB route through the UPLB College of Forestry, another one is at the Makiling Philippine Art's Center which you can also access via the university and the third one, the most difficult and unestablished, is the Sto. Tomas trail located at the other side of the mountain, in Sto. Tomas Batangas. The UPLB route has a well-established trail wherein you can even drive your way up three-fourth to the summit. Mt. Makiling is actually an in-active volcano. It has a "mudspring" park with sulfuric vents, which are located near the picnic grounds. Makiling is the source of Los Baños' hot springs. Makiling has three peaks, the highest and the usual destination is the Second Peak.

Much more challenging than the UPLB trail are the trails on the south face of Mt. Makiling, arising from Sto. Tomas, Batangas. The forests teem with limatik and poison ivy and the trails are labyrinthine, spawning a lot of entry and exit points. Moreover, the precarious location of the trails have taken its toll on climbers, causing injuries and even deaths in the past. These elements of danger must be considered by anyone who dare enter Makiling on this side. The rewards, of course, are great: after crossing this difficult trail, going down via UPLB is relatively pleasant, especially during the summer months. The sights along the way, especially in Haring Bato and later in Melkas Ridge, encompass much of Batangas province and the vicinity, including Mt. Maculot; Mt. Malipunyo, and Mt. Banahaw.

'Maktrav' has become the nickname for the Makiling Traverse, and such is the itinerary detailed here. It is commenced on plain ground of rural fields: patches or fields of bananas and corn, and segments of cogon grassland. PinoyMountaineer has isolated two major trail variants of the Sto. Tomas trail. The more often used is the west trail, which is more outlined in the internet as passing landmarks like the Palanggana campsite and peak. The other - the Sipit Trail, goes straight to the Melkas Ridge (Gubatan) campsite. The two have relatively similar time requirements.

 **LEGEND:**

Makiling is one of the most famous mountain in the archipelago and with that comes a lot of folklore and legends about the mountain and the goddess that lives in the mountain, Mariang Maikiling. In fact people living within the towns under the shadow of the mountains has always describe the silhouette of the mountain peak as that of Makiling lying down.

One of the famous stories is about an enchanted woman who lived in the quiet woods at the foot of Mt. Makiling. The people named her Maria Makiling because of where she lived. She was a young and beautiful woman. The beauty abundance and serenity of this enchanted place complimented her rare qualities. She was kind and compassionate to the town people. She shared the full and rich abundance of her enchanted places; fishes in the lake, food and crops, fruits and trees. All were for free. People could borrow from her whatever they need, whatever they wanted. Her kindness was known far and wide. One afternoon, a hunter came by and wandered into her kingdom. When he saw her beauty, he fell in love with her and she too felt the same way for him. They met and talk everyday and promised to love each other forever. Until one day Maria waited for him but he did not come. Maria discovered that he found a real woman and got married. She was very sad and frustrated. She felt deeply hurt and realized that the town people could not be trusted because she was different from them and they were just using her. Forgiving was really difficult. Her sadness and frustration turned into anger that she refused to give fruits to the trees. Animals and birds were no more. Fish no longer abound the lakes. People seldom saw her. It was only during pale moonlit nights that they sometimes see her.

Another story is about three suitors who intensely battled for the heart of Makiling. One was a Spanish soldier, another, a Spanish-Filipino mestizo and the third, a Filipino farmer named Juan. In the end the Filipino won the heart of Maria Makiling which angered the two other suitor. They have plotted to kill him through a fire that broke down on the garrison, which they blamed against Filipinos including Juan. They shot Juan as punishment and before dying he shouted the name of Maria. Maria went down in the mountain and cursed the two as well as the other men who cannot accept failure in love then she went back in the mountains never to be seen again. The Spanish soldier died during the revolution while the mestizo died of illness. When somebody gets lost in the mountains, people attribute it to the curse on Makiling.

 **WHEN & HOW TO GO:**

Makiling can be climbed all year round. As mentioned earlier, Makiling has three trails, the UPLB, the Arts Center and the Sto. Tomas.

STO. TOMAS TRAIL

From Manila, take southbound buses that goes to Batangas City, Lemery or any Bus that will pass by Sto. Tomas Batangas. Alight at the Sto. Tomas Public Market where you can also buy some final necessities. A Jolibee fastfood restaurant is also located a walking distance from the market. Take tricycle to Almeda Resort at Barangay San Bartolome. If you have a private vehicle, the road to San Bartolome has a distinguishable arc on your left side going to Batangas City after passing by the YKK factory. Don't go directly to the Almeda Resort. Take the dirt road at the side of the gate of the resort. The initial part of trek passes by access roads to the farms and resort at the lower slope. Then you will enter Almeda Resort's back-end along a "14 stations of the cross" ending in a grotto. Surprisingly, there are lots of big signs that tells you that the place is a private property and strongly advises that there should be "no trespassing." I just wonder how they were able to acquire a part of a national reserve and be greedy about it. You will pass by a hut (good water source) where you have to take the smaller trail to the left that continues the stations of the cross. At the end, you will be greeted by a UPLB sign indicating the Do's and Dont's in the mountain which all contradicts the existence of the Resort. Continuing further, the final hut is the end of the established trail.

Just go directly to the top of the hill passing by the small plantation and retrace the trail which again becomes established. If you reach a place which locals calls "palanggana" or basin which also has a small grotto, youre on the right track (last water source). Take the trail on the rightmost of palanggana. You will then enter a cogon field which is very tiring on a sunny day since its really steep and exposed. But the views along the trail are awesome. The trial forks again so take the left most trail going up. After an hour, you will then enter the rainforest. Trek is pleasant and not tiring since its is a level trek along what they call the "Melkas ridge." A signboard claims that the name of the trail is the "Wild Boar Trail." You will continually descend to Makiling's crater called "Gubatan" or jungle where you have to set camp 1. You can either proceed at a campsite in one of the peaks but I dont advise new comers not familiar with the trail to do this since it would be very difficult when night sets in while you are still on trail.

 **cont. WHEN & HOW TO GO:**

There are forks along gubatan, one leads to the peak camp I have mentioned passing by a wall they call "Haring Bato." Another goes to the saddle of this peak camp (Mt. Cornites?) and Peak 3. If you take this trail, take the right trail from the saddle. Taking the left one will bring you to the peak camp. From here, the trekking will be more difficult due to the dense forest cover. 3-4 hours of trek will take you to Peak 2 on your way to UPLB.

Notes: (1) There is confusion as to where the real Haring Bato is -- whether it is part of Melkas Ridge or down the line in the Palanggana (West) trail. (2) Gubatan campsite is assumed here to be the same as the Melkas Ridge campsite. (3) The clearing surrounded by cogon right after Melkas may very well be Peak 3, and perhaps this is also Mt. Cornites. Accounts in the internet are conflicting and Pinoy Mountaineer will update labels in this itinerary as soon as they are verified/rectified.

 **SUGGESTED ITINERARY:**

DAY 01 February 16, 2008	
0530H	Assembly Time at Jollibee Pacita
0600H	ETD Pacita to Turbina
0700H	ETA Turbina, ETD to Santo Tomas Batangas
0730H	ETA Sto Tomas Public Market (Buy foods)
0800H	Take tricycle to jump-off point at Almeda Resort Brgy San Bartolome
0830H	Start Trek
1130H	Lunch at Palanggana (Pack Lunch)
1230H	Resume Trek
1600H	ETA Gubatan Campsite, Set-up camp, prepare dinner
1900H	Dinner, Socialites
2330H	Lightsout

DAY 01 February 17, 2008	
0530H	Wake-up call prepare breakfast (Light meal)
0700H	Start Trek
0900H	Mt. Cornites to Mt. Makiling (Peak 2)
1200H	Peak 2 (Light Lunch)
1300H	Resume Trek (UPLB Trail)
1600H	ETA UPLB
1630H	ETD to Calamba (Waltermart)
1730H	ETD to Pacita Complex

 **CHECKLIST:**

DESCRIPTION	ITEM
Trekking Attire	T-shirt with warmer or sweat shirt, short, leggings, mountain boots, sandals bandana or cap, rain gear, sunglass, and socks
Equipment and Supplies per individual (IMPORTANT)	Water source not available at camp, trail water excluded (3 liters each),
	Flashlight each with reserved batteries
	1 mess kit (spoon, fork, plate and goblet)
	1 toiletry (tissue, soap, toothpaste)
Group Equipments	Cookset, and stove, lantern and stoves
Meal Contributions	100 (tentative) pesos each camper for the food, liquor, spices and others.
	Each camper should bring breads, noodles and 1 can goods. (No Exceptions)
	Bring your own lunch on the first day of the climb (Pack Lunch)
REMINDERS: Follow the rule...	

MEAL PREPARATION:

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Day 1 – Feb 16	NA	Pack Lunch (KKB) Palanggana	Rice, Adobo, Soup, Veggie Gubatan
Day 2 – Feb 17	Soup / Bread	Can Goods and Rice Peak 2	NA

SPECIAL CONCERNS

The full establishment of the Sto. Tomas trails have yet to come; as of Jan. 2008 the trails are still in poor shape and there are many reports of getting waylaid along the way. Others may attribute their experiences to spirits dwelling in Makiling but in truth, the trails are really confusing. Trails signs are present especially the West trail, usually in form of ribbons, so be watchful (other ribbons have become faded). You can try arranging for guides in Brgy. San Miguel, although no established guide service exists.

Limatik (Land Leeches) and poison ivy are major concerns also. You may want to have a look on the Limatik FAQs page for more information. As for poison ivy and other noxious plants, a full-cover clothing is recommended. Insect repellent is also highly recommended.

Wild boar traps are said to be in place in some of the hunter trails, so you have to watch out for this. This is also one of the possible pitfalls (literally) of following an alternate track.

As of Jan. 2008 the ropes at Melkas Ridge are still in good condition.

TRIVIA:

The blogger unsuccessfully attempted a traverse of Mt. Makiling on Jan. 12, 2008. It was day of continuous rains, and two limatik entered his eyes, one on each eye! The other was manually removed by a friendly villager on his way down, and the other left on its own during his sleep on that night. He also sighted a vine snake (2 meters long) and a horde of goats sheltering from the rain.

Reportedly there are also cults in the Sto. Tomas side of Mt. Makiling, akin to those in Mt. Banahaw, and sometimes they can be hostile or unfriendly.

CLIMBER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

If there is an established trail, walk in a single line and avoid creating new trails. Widening of such and formation of new ones can damage the soil and kill the plants crossing the paths of hikers.

Do not take anything from the forests as souvenir. If each climber would bring home one souvenir, the future climbers may be left with nothing but ugly remains of a once-beautiful place.

Avoid disturbing wildlife. Many species of animals become stressed due to disturbance by man.

Never leave garbage along the trail or at the campsite. Oftentimes, the local communities do not have well-managed waste disposals, so it will be better to bring the garbage to the cities for proper disposal.

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For human waste, each climber can dig his own "toilet", about six inches deep, and cover it with soil afterwards. Common latrines are proven to be bad because the soil cannot break down concentrated amounts of waste in reasonable time; it would be much better to bring along waste treatment gear to bring down the wastes back to the cities for proper disposal.

Do not bathe or wash dishes along rivers. The people downstream may be using the water for drinking purposes. Do the washing or bathing about twenty feet (make that 100 ft.) from the river bank. A more acceptable bathing practice is to do it without using soap.



CLIMBER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

Before traveling to a foreign culture or to an isolated village, it is best to learn the locals' culture to avoid embarrassing situations, both to the visitors and to the hosts.

Be sensitive to the values of the local people. Tourists may bring culture shock to the villagers and may alter the basic values of the population.

Do not buy souvenir items made from rare animal or plant species or questionable sources.

Find out the maximum capacity of the trekking area before going to prevent over-crowding and to minimize the impacts on the environment.

Make sure that health measures are taken into account in order to avoid disease transfer between the visitors and the locals.

If no one is familiar with the destination, always hire a guide. It saves time and lessens the probability of accidents.

Always register with the municipal or barangay (village) or park office or leave the names and number of the trekkers to any local official at the jump-off point. Tell them the date the group is expected to return so that emergency measures can be adopted the soonest possible time in case of accident.



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