



DAHONPALAY MOUNTAINEERS



MT. TAPULAO

LOCATION:	Iba, Zambales
ELEVATION:	2037 meters above sea level
LEVEL:	Major Climb, Level II, Strenuous
JUMP-OFF POINTS	Damapay-Salaza
ESTIMATED BUDGET	P 1200 (Tentative) - minimum
IT CREATED BY:	J. Tanega (Thanks to L. Henson MMS and Pinoy Mountaineer)



INFO FROM MMS (L. Henson):

Mt. Tapulao is located at Iba, the capital of Zambales Province, it is 87 kilometers away from Olongapo City. Mt. Tapulao is also known as Mt. High Peak. It's prevalent in the Philippines for mountains to have two or more names since there are names given by early explorers (outsiders) and the names used by the locals living near the place. Tapulao belongs to the "2000 mountains" having a height of 2,037 meters above sea level. The mountain was once featured in a local newspaper as the "super cool mountain" since the recent expedition led by the mayor of the locality claimed the place as cooler than Baguio (he haven't tried climbing other mountains before that's why he thought it as unusual).

The existing trail being used to go to the summit is an old miner's trail. The mountain was once a site of a large-scale carbide mining operations. In fact you will be surprised to see mine pits on the summit as well as other related structures along the trail. Views from the summit are awesome, with 360 degrees view point vista. From there you can see Lingayen Gulf and South China Sea, Pundaquit and the Zambales lowlands- all are feast for the eyes.

Dampay Salaza, the jump-off point, is a resettlement area. The wide trail begins from this small village all the way to the summit area. The trail is really wide, in fact you can drive your way up to almost half of the entire trail. If for not the recent landslide, you can even drive your way to the campsite area, where old rusting tractors, a sign of the busy mining days, rests on its grave. Be cautious though, since it is only advisable to bring 4 wheel drive vehicles. The trail is interesting, from an ordinary typical Philippine rainforest mountain trail, you will suddenly enter a different world as if you are in one of the Benguet high mountains. Very much Benguet but less the mountain tribes. The destination, the summit, is at the rear end of the mountain which explains why you have to trek that far. There is however, a continuing trail, which according to rumors goes on the other side, to Tarlac/Pangasinan via a 5 day trek. The area is nestled in between mountain ranges, very much isolated, as mentioned without any local tribes. The place also offers different action adventures, compared to other mountaineering destinations, wherein you can bike, drive and even kayak.

Generally, Tapulao is not your ordinary mountain. You will have to trek on a continuous uphill trail, 17 kilometers in length, 6 hours of trekking time. The trek will test your limits and will truly separate the boys from the men.



INFO FROM PINOY MOUNTAINEER:

Hiking amidst pine trees in a semi-temperate climate is an experience usually attributed to the Cordilleras, Mt. Pulag in particular. However, Mt. Tapulao in Zambales possesses the same charms. In fact, its name, Tapulao, means pine tree in the local dialect, and it is truly an apt description. However, it has a character of its own. The trails are wide throughout, and there is mining activity all the way to the 'Generator campsite'. As you near the summit, you will see piles of rocks, containing chromite ore. You will also encounter miners who are, despite reports to the contrary, very friendly. If you want, you can even hitch a ride in their yellow 4x4 trucks – and cut the hiking time from 10 hours to as brief as 3-4 hours.

Many hikers would prefer the long, "endless" way. After all, who wouldn't mind climbing amidst the lofty, Sagada-like environment? If you start early, you can start trekking through the open fields even before dawn, such that when the sun is already high, you would've already passed the two water sources and reached the 'cool part' – with temperatures ranging from 19 C to a nighttime, year-end temperature of 6 C. After the open fields a rain forest, with trees hundreds of feet high, ensue, before the pine forest. From the start of the pines, it will take three more hours to finally reach the bunkhouse. Here, there is a steep path that leads to the 'secret campsite' which guards the entrance to the forest line. If your group has 4 tents or less, it is best to camp here. There are also campsites you will encounter before you reach the 'Bunker' (which has a water source). Alternatively, you can continue to the main road to reach the 'Generator campsite'. It can accommodate more tents but recently, it is no longer advisable to camp here because of mining activity.

The forest line, 1875 MASL, leads to the summit. It is a 45-minute trek through a dense, mossy forest. Here, as in the forest trail from 'Generator', the flora and fauna are marvelous! You will see numerous insect species, birds, as well as varicolored flowers and exotic plants. Foreigners, the miners say, go all the way to Tapulao to survey the rich biodiversity.

The peak, however, is unremarkable. It is marked by an open pit. Don't expect to see any marvelous views, although South China Sea can be seen, along with the other Zambales mountains. Remember that you came to Tapulao for the trail scenes and the unique environments: the rainforest below, the pine forests midway, and the mossy forest at the higher altitudes. There is an alternate trail to Tapulao. On the way down, it forks

from the main road at around 1500 MASL. The locals say it leads to a river system, takes you deep in the rainforest, and its highlight is a spectacular waterfall. They also say that wild animals like deer and monkeys continue to roam free in the slopes of Mt. Tapulao .

Mt. Tapulao , being closer to Manila , is being touted as an alternative to Mt. Pulag , and is dubbed as the 'poor man's Pulag'. The Tapulao experience, however, makes it much more than an alternative, but a destination in its own right, unique from the Cordilleras and special in its place as the High Peak of Zambales mountains.



WHEN & HOW TO GO:

Tapulao is climbed whole year round. It's a dilemma to decide when is the best time to climb the mountain. During summer months, you will be assured of a clear scenic climb but since trails are too exposed, you will curse the sunshine that will make you feel you are being fried alive. Rainy season, on the other hand makes the trekking pleasant but, other than the possibility of a viewless climb, the weather really turns unbearably cool. It's not the temperature though, since it only reaches for about 16-18 degrees Celsius, but the strong winds that increases the coolness of the day.

To go there, take a Victory Liner bus bound for Iba Zambales. It's only Caloocan and Pasay Victory that has trips going to Iba and only late evenings- last trip is at 11:30 PM. It's always fully booked so it's better to buy your tickets earlier. From Iba Zambales Victory terminal, you can ask tricycles or hire a jeep to take you to the jump-off point at Dampay-Salaza where you can register from the house of the *kagawad*. *You can ask for directions from people living in the area.*

From the trailhead, take the miner's trail until you reach the bunker where you have to set-camp for the day. You can set up camp on the summit but it cannot accommodate more than 2 tents. The trek will take around 7-9 hours depending on your pacing. Early next day, assault the summit, which is an hour away from the bunker. Going down is faster- about 3-5 hours but after that continuous downhill, prepare yourself for two days of aching legs.



SUGGESTED ITINERARY:

DAY 01 March 21, 2008	
2030H	Assembly Time at Jollibee Pacita
2230H	ETA Victory Liner (Pasay Terminal)
2300H	ETD Pasay to Iba Zambales
DAY 02 March 22, 2008	
0400H	ETA Iba Zambales arrange tricycle to Jump-off point.
0500H	ETA Jump-off point; courtesy call to Kagawad
0900H	ETA First water source
1200H	ETA Second water source (pack lunch)
1700H	ETA "Bunker" Campsite, set camp, prepare dinner
1900H	Dinner, Socials
2300H	Lights Out
DAY 03 March 23, 2008	
0430H	Wake-up call, breakfast
0530H	Assault Summit
0600H	ETA Summit
0630H	Trek back to campsite
0700H	Campsite, break camp
0730H	Start Descent
1100H	ETA Second water source, lunch (can goods)
1300H	ETA First water source
1500H	Back at jump-off point, take tricycle to Iba
1600H	Take bus to Manila
2100H	ETA Manila



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 (Advisable to bring extra jacket)
Equipment and Supplies per individual (IMPORTANT)	Water source available, trail water excluded (advisable to bring 3 liters each)
	1 mess kit (spoon, fork, plate and goblet)
	1 toiletry (tissue, soap, toothpaste)
	Flashlight and batteries
Group Equipments	Cookset, and stove, lantern and stoves
Meal Contributions	120 (tentative) pesos each camper for the food, liquor, spices and others.
	Each camper should bring breads, noodles and 1 can goods. (No Exceptions)
	Pack lunch on the first day of climb
REMINDERS: Follow the rule...	



SPECIAL CONCERN:

Climbers complain that the trail is endlessly long (15 kms to Bunker), and some may find a two-day IT too short to do a comfortable hike. You may either space it into three days, or hitch a ride with the miners, even for a short segment of the trip. The three water sources are good throughout the year but it is still advisable to bring 3 Liters.

Evenings at Tapulao are very, very cold; beginners have to be warned that thermal clothing is advisable and a simple, single jacket is not enough.



MEAL PREPARATION:

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Day 1 – Mar 21	NA	NA	Snack at bus
Day 2 – Mar 22	Iba Terminal	2 nd water source (pack lunch)	Adobo Giniling and Rice Bunker Camp
Day 3 – Mar 23	Noodles and Breads	Breads and canned goods 2 nd water source	Iba terminal



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.

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.

 **CONTACTS:**

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Multiply Website	http://dahonpalay.multiply.com
Tripod Site	http://dahonpalaymountaineers.tripod.com

 **Expenses:**

Bus Fare – P 610 (Back and fort) *tentative if fare increased*

Tricycle fare (Iba to Damapay) - P100 each (Back and fort),
Trike rate : P200/tike/4 pax
tentative if fare increased

Ambagan – P120 each for Butane, Food, and Drinks
depends of number of participants

*Note: Expenses on the bus and breakfast/dinner at Terminal is for your own expenses.