



DESTINATION: MT. BANAHAW - GUIS-GUIS TRAIL

LOCATION	Quezon (Dolores, Lukban, Sariaya, Lucena, Tiaong, Candelaria, Tayabas) and Laguna (San Pablo, MajjJay, Liliw, Nagcarlan)
COORDINATES	
ELEVATION	2450 meters above sea level
LEVEL	Major Climb, Level III, Strenuous
DISTINCT CHARACTERISTICS	Pilgrimage Place; Rainforest; In-active Volcano; Crater View (Caldera)
ACTIVITIES	Hiking
JUMP-OFF POINT	Kinabuhayan, Bgy Sta Lucia, Dolores Quezon and/or Palmas Verde, Sariaya, Quezon
AVERAGE DAYS REQUIRED	2.5 - 3 days (including travel time from Manila)
MINIMUM DAYS REQUIRED	2 days (including travel time from Manila)
IT CREATED BY	Long Henson with inputs from Mark Santos
DATE LAST UPDATED	August 10, 2001

● INFORMATION

Guis-guis trail or the Sariaya or "Ilalim" trail is one of the most spectacular trails in Mt. Banahaw. When you have experienced climbing Banahaw, you would think it's crazy to trek down inside the crater of the mystical mountain. But yet pilgrims has been doing this for years even before mountaineers climbed Banahaw and this is sometimes done with their barefoot. I remembered the first time I climbed Banahaw in 1994; I was surprised to see pilgrims coming out of the volcano! This is the most difficult of all the Banahaw trails. It would entail some technical skills like maneuvering 70-80 degrees walls 10-30 meters in height. But for the experienced alpinist, this may not be that difficult. But no need to worry, you may pass that trail only once since you have an option of going out via Sariaya (Banahaw's collapsed wall - Banahaw is actually a crescent shaped crater with portions of its wall collapsed. You may see this when traveling towards Lucena). In the middle of the crater is what pilgrim claim as the New Jerusalem, the center of their faith. Also inside the crater is Guis-guis river also known as the river of blood and milk (white and red (iron oxide?)), which is also a popular pilgrim destination. Guisguis is not for solo climbers since you will need assistance on the "wall" area.

● LEGENDS

One of the Banahaw legends talks about a family- Lukban and Bayabas- the parent to Limbas. This was during the time when most places in the region have no name yet particularly the mountains. Limbas is a well know young man who is strong and agile. When he goes into the mountain, he usually comes back with the best catch- wild boar, deer and different kinds of birds. His fame grew and his parent became proud of him. But one day, he wandered into the mountains and he never returned. His parents became worried of what might have happened to him. On the seventh day, he returned and he told his parents what had happened. Limbas met an old man who be-friend him. He took him up the summit of the mountain which was the abode of the old man. He was rich and he has many mystical things with him. All animals in the summit have white hair. He even has a carriage drawn by white horses which can take you all around the country. He also has a vast Anahaw plantation. He was good to Limbas and before he sent him home he gave him the finest clothes and foods with the warning that he should always kiss the hands of his parents the first thing every time he went home.

Limbas' trip to the mountain became frequent and his parents became happy for the goods he brought home with him. The old man have also grew pond of Limbas. One day while with Limbas, the old man gave him a heavier sack, compared to the previous ones he got, to bring back home. On the way down, Limbas became curious and inspected the contents of the sack. He found out that it was gold ! He hurriedly went home excited. Upon reaching their house, he shouted, "we're rich ! we're rich !" and he immediately poured the sack with gold. But surprisingly, the contents were just Anahaw nuts. In surprise, he shouted Ba! Anahaw !, Ba ! Anahaw ! He remembered that he did not kissed the hand of his parents, before anything else, which may have caused the curse.

From then on, he never set foot on the mountain and in disgust, people often hear from his mouth, Ba-Anahaw which in the passing of time was shortened to Banahaw. The people started to call that mountain Banahaw. And because of the popularity of the incident, the names of some places where also taken from the story like Lukban and Tayabas towns which got its name from Limbas' parents.

● WHEN AND HOW TO GO

There are two ways of exploring the Sariaya trail. One is via Dolores and the other is the reverse or via Sariaya. The latter is more difficult since it's harder to climb a 90-degree wall than going down from it although it's much scarier to go down than climb up. But there is also one more trail or a third option- a "lost" trail in Guisguis. Lost in the sense that nobody is using it lately. I have read it from the book of Michael Dinkhun (Let's Hike, 1994). From the Gatas, instead of going straight to Sariaya, you will go right towards Dolores and back to Kinabuhayan.

DOLORES SARIAYA TRAIL

The Dolores to Sariaya trail can be taken in two days, which is if you are really fit and experienced. Otherwise if you have time, it is more convenient to do this in three days. If you will be doing this in two days, you have to be in the summit on the first day by lunch and down the crater campsite by evening (maybe you should go to Dolores Friday evening to have an early trek the next day). If you have the luxury of three days, you can take your time to go to the summit on the first day. The itinerary featured here is the two-day approach. Those who will take the three days approach, adjust the IT accordingly wherein the first camp is at Durungawan and the second day going down to the campsite while the third day is similar to the second day of the two-day approach. The trail to go down the crater is within the Durungawan III area and is clearly visible. There are portions wherein it is really steep - 70-80 degrees but ropes are available to support you.



Map of the Banahaw trails, RED-Guisquis; BLUE-Dolores; VIOLET-Tayabas and YELLOW-Lukban (there are other minor trails besides this. Taytay Falls is part of Lukban). The blue thick line is the GUISS GUISS RIVER.

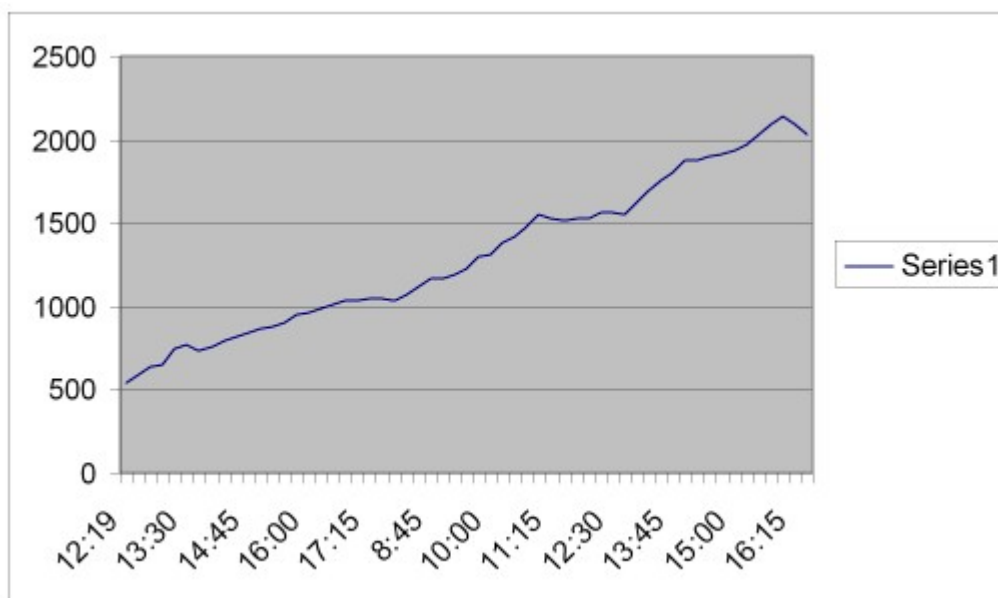
SARIAYA- DOLORES TRAIL

If you will be taking the Dolores to Sariaya approach, this is better done in three days but can still be accomplished in two days for the fit and hardcore mountaineers. Take the bus bound for Lucena. Alight at Palmas Verde subdivision within Conception Sariaya Quezon. From the subdivision gate, there are hybrid tricycles locals simply calls "motor." It's another indigenous mutation this time created to suite the rough off-road trail to the jump-off point. The cost for outsider though is steep, 300 Php per bike (although locals told us it should only be 25 Php). Better yet, if you can hire a jeep, get one to avoid getting short-changed. If you take the tricycle, be prepared to have your stomach turned upside down. The destination is what locals call Pinagbakuran, specifically, Manggahan. If you can push further, you can ask the vehicle to take you to the jump-off point passing by a place they call Banahaw then back to a portion of Pinagbakuran.

A certain caretaker, deputized by Bantay Banahaw, lives there who also acts as the registration officer. The trek starts from a forested area then finally enters the guis-guis river system. From here trekking is really strenuous wherein you have to step from boulder to boulder. There is a religious settlement here called Carmen. From Carmen, the next stop is a water source which locals venerates and calls Balon ni Birhen Maria. This is the ideal emergency camp if you are within the area at about 4:00 PM since the true campsite, Palacio is still 3-4 hours away. You can prevent this from happening if you leave Manila as early as 4:00 AM. A hill facing this emergency camp is a showcase of a natural phenomenon by 6:00 PM as thousands of giant bats leaves the place for the night's hunt.

Early the next morning, trek towards Palacio. This is more strenuous and "death defying" since you will be climbing vertical walls and passes by numerous waterfalls. After reaching Palacio by noon, take your lunch since this will be the last water source. The next water source will be in Kinabuhayan. There is a hermit by the name of Mang Seph who lives in the area. He is living there for 6 years and is a former bank employee (PNB). The trail system in Palacio is a bit confusing since hundreds of pilgrims frequent the place during Holy Week. After Palacio, the steep ascent begins.

Initially, it will be via a covered forest then in the open cogonal area. Here is where you will encounter the dreaded 20+ meters high vertical wall. Ropes are available though but as far as I am concerned, one slip of your foothold will be disastrous since I don't think you can carry your bodyweight and your backpack after a jerking experience after a slip-up. Here is where you should be really cautious- it will take an average of 5-10 minutes per person on your way up the wall. Only one person can climb at a time so if there is a large party, this may significantly delay you. During my trek, I have met here a family going down with a 7 year old boy ! After the long assault, it's Durungawan 3. You can still descend to Kinabuhayan but if it is already past 2:00, its better to spend the day at Durungawan I.



● POINTS OF INTEREST

Some of the pwestos along the Guis-guis trail other than the Dolores pwestos includes Palacio, Gatas, Grotto, and Hardin ni San Pedro. There is also a sect headquarters within the mouth of Banahaw called Carmen .

● SUGGESTED ITINERARY

DAY 1 (Not considered Day 1 of the climb)

19:00	ETD from Manila to San Pablo
22:00	ETA San Pablo, ETD Kinabuhayan, Dolores
23:00	ETA, Dolores- Light's Off

DAY 2

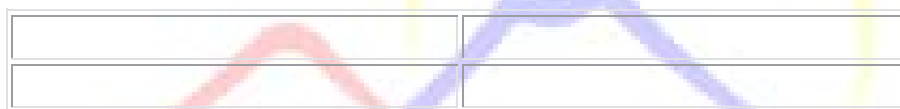
05:00	Wake-up Call, Breakfast
06:00	Start Trek to Durungawan
13:00	ETA Durungawan I - Lunch
13:30	ETA Durungawan III. Descend to Palacio (be careful-

	lots of fork along trail to Palacio)
18:00	ETA Campsite (Gatas) - Dinner, Set Camp (If big party, camp at Palacio- big campsite)
21:00	Light's Off

DAY 3

07:00	Wake-up Call, Breakfast, Breakcamp
08:00	Start Trek
10:00	Grotto
11:00	Carmen HQ - Early Lunch. Register. look for Wilson for assistance.
12:00	Resume Trek
12:45	Barangay Pinagbakuran
13:30	Tricycle Terminal (Pardos) - Ride towards Palmas Verde
14:15	ETA Palmas Verde- Hi-way
15:30	ETD for Manila
18:30	ETA Manila

PICTURES



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

If you will be taking the two day approach remember that you have to be at Durungawan by 12:00 and to do this, you have to pack light ! Bring only essentials. It would also be ideal to have ropes with you but if it would affect your speed via the additional weight, forget about it. It is not true that Sariaya Trail (not Sariaya itself) is rebel infested. Water source is before the Palacio camp site. There is no more potable water after this. Guis-guis river is not potable. Most part at Ilalim is similar to trekking Pinatubo with multiple shallow river crossings.

CONTACTS

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