



DESTINATION: BIAK NA BATO NATIONAL PARK

LOCATION :	Bulacan Province
ELEVATION :	1009 meters above sea level (highest point)
LEVEL :	Minor Climb, Level I, Easy
JUMP OFF POINTS :	San Miguel, Bulacan
AVERAGE DAYS REQUIRED :	2 Days (including travel time from Manila)
MINIMUM DAYS REQUIRED :	1 Day (including travel time from Manila)
IT CREATED BY :	Long Henson
DISTINCT CHARACTERISTICS :	Caving, Hiking, Climbing, Swimming, River Trekking
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INFORMATION

Biak na Bato National Park is one of the premier national park being developed as tourist destination especially for local tourist. The place is an ideal environment exploration exposure with cave system, forest, river system, and mountains especially for first timers. It also has a lot of activities to offer like caving (lots of caves are located within the park area), hiking (trails for minor and major hikes can be made), climbing (Susong Dalaga of San Miguel from Mt. Mabio or the highest point, Mt. Silid at 1009 meters above sea level), rock climbing (I don't know if somebody has already done this but the place has lot of limestone walls to offer), river trekking (from Yungib I to park entrance, it's a fantastic experience), kayaking (again, nobody have done this but I tell, you, the rivers has a lot to offer), mountain biking (they have created mountain bike trails but haven't seen one doing it), swimming (like the local tourists), camping (ideal for the whole family), rappelling (from cliffs to caves) and a lot more. A lot of local tourists come to this place during the weekend because there are picnics grounds available as well as swimming areas.

Biak na Bato national park covers a total land area of 658 hectares and is a part of the mighty Sierra Madre mountain range. It lies in the north east corner of Bulacan, at the edge of the Sierra Madre. The park has a total of around 16 named caves and a couple of unnamed and unexplored ones. This is due to the fact that large portions of the Sierra Madre are made of limestone a composition which is an ideal candidate for cave formation. These caves had been carved by nature via the rivers that flows from Calumpit Bulacan, which passes by the park and empties at Candaba Swamp in

Pampanga. This had happened for millions of years before the present cave system came to be. But bringing people to these caves poses danger since lack of information can stop the evolution of these caves or worst, even vandalization of these beautiful natural phenomenon.

◆ LEGENDS

The place got its name from the distinctive natural environment that can be found in this area, which are mountain gorges with mountains resembling solid rock limestone cut by deep river gorges. "Biak na bato" literally means "split boulders". The area earned a place in history when the Filipino revolutionaries against Spain particularly the first president of the Philippine Republic, Emilio Aguinaldo, used this place as their camp due to the natural cave systems and dense forest that helped them in securing the place. Here is where the famous historical event, the signing of a peace treaty between the Filipino revolutionaries or Katipuneros and the Spanish government happened. Eventually they called that event "The Pact of Biak na Bato". From thereon, the place became a historical pilgrim place during celebrations such as Independence Day. It also played a large role during the recent centennial celebrations of the Philippine independence. Most places here can be connected to Philippine history. Some locations are named in accordance with their functions during the these historical days like the Aguinaldo Cave, the "La Mesa de Aguinaldo", and the Tanggapan Cave where according to legends, the Katipunero's receive their guest hence the name.

◆ WHEN AND HOW TO GO

To go to the place, take a bus going to San Miguel Bulacan along North EDSA. It's safe and convenient and is much advisable to take your private vehicle since there are lots of transfers if you will just commute. Parking spaces are available as well as people who can guard your car so you don't need to worry. From the San Miguel Hi-way, Department of Tourism markers are situation along the road that will guide you to the place. If commuting, you have to get off from the hi-way where the marker and the access road to Biak na Bato are located and then take a tricycle ride to the park entrance. Park Entrance cost 15 pesos per head. Camping fee is around 150 if staying overnight.

◆ POINTS OF INTEREST

As mentioned earlier, there are a lot of things to do and places to go to in this park but I advice for new comers not to consume the entire trip on all the caves alone. The Santol, Cuarto-cuarto, Bahay Paniki, Suklib Kabayo and Aguinaldo caves are the interesting ones to go to. Then consider other activities like river trekking after hiking from Yungib I, passing by deep portions of the river and some natural formations such as the "tulay na bato" towards the park entrance. You can also hike the backcountry and climb "Mt. Silid or Mt. Mabio's Susong Dalaga".

San Miguel is a part of the historical province of Bulacan so there are lots of historical places to pass by like the Barasoan Church. There are also other "nature-adventure" destinations like the Pinagrealan Caves in Norzagaray, Madlum Caves in San Miguel, Angat Dam to Irid and Matulid River Systems in Angat as well as Doña Remedios Trinidad also in Angat.

◆ SUGGESTED ITINERARY

DAY 1

- 07:00 - Assembly at SM North EDSA
- 07:30 - ETD for Biak na Bato. If commuting its better to hire an FX taxi that can take you at the park entrance at reasonable cost. They usually roam around the SM area
- 10:30 - ETA Biak na Bato, Facilitate Payments and Permits, Set-up Camp

- 11:00 - Prepare for Lunch
- 12:00 - Lunch
- 13:00 - Trek to Bahay Paniki, and an unnamed cave beside it
- 14:00 - Trek to Santol Cave
- 15:00 - Trek to Yungib I then River Trek to Park Entrance
- 17:00 - Back at Camp, Prepare Dinner
- 18:00 - Dinner, Socials
- 21:00 - Light's Out

DAY 2

- 08:00 - Wake-up Call, Breakfast
- 09:00 - Explore Aguinaldo and Cuarto-Cuarto
- 10:30 - Break Camp
- 11:00 - ETD for San Miguel Bulacan
- 12:00 - Lunch Along the Way
- 14:00 - ETA Manila

◆ SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CLIMBING

It's a bit frustrating since there are lots of rules or policies that are more opportunistic than having a good reason for implementing here in this park. The parking lot for one is always close except when there is a government official around. I am not sure if the Mayor knows about this but one reason I see why they close this is because the local stores along the park entrance will offer you parking spaces for a fee. Even the park guard will not allow you to park in front of the entrance and will ask you to go to the store's parking lot instead. There is this ghost library that has been created which I don't why they ever built without any plans finishing it. The guides will also stop you from entering even easy caves and will tell you that it is their policy (guide association) not to allow anyone from entering the caves unless they have an accredited guide with them for the protection of the caves and to make sure you will not get hurt. A noble intention but more of a way to force people to hire their services which are too expensive even if you will just be going inside a small shallow cave. The tourism council, the guide association, local community, local government unit and NGO representatives should coordinate and meet regarding how the park should be run for the benefit of the tourist and the park itself.

If you will explore a lot of caves, it is advised to wear a hard hat or even a bicycle hat if you don't have the spelunking or caving hat because the stalactites are sharp and dangerous. Wear also long-sleeved clothes and long pants because after cave activities, you will be covered with mud and guano (bat droppings). If you will be river trekking wear comfortable swimwear and waterproof your belongings like cameras etc. Aguinaldo cave is partly submerged under water so the same is recommended. The important thing is to bring extra shirts and toiletries for bathing.

Foods are ample as well as drinks. Stores are a short walking distance from the campsite. You can bring things you have dreamt of bringing on a climb since the campsite is just a 10-minute walk from the park entrance.

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