



DESTINATION : MT. TAPULAO (HIGH PEAK)

LOCATION	Zambales Province
COORDINATES	
ELEVATION	2037 meters above sea level
LEVEL	Level II, Major, Strenuous
DISTINCT CHARACTERISTICS	Wide Miner's Trail, Pine Trees, Cool Temperature
ACTIVITIES	Hiking, Mountain Biking, Moto-cross, 4X4 Driving
JUMP-OFF POINT	Dampay Salaza, Iba Zambales
AVERAGE DAYS REQUIRED	2 days
MINIMUM DAYS REQUIRED	2 days
IT CREATED BY	Long Henson
DATE LAST UPDATED	August 8, 2001

● INFORMATION

Mt. Tapulao is located at Iba, the capital of Zambales Province and the birth place of former president Ramon Magsaysay, 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 (yes there are white water rivers- explored by one familiar expat- Steven Rogers).

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.

● LEGENDS

The story of Olongapo is derived from a colorful legend about a well loved chieftain called Apo, whose headless body is one day found at the beach of the fishing village. A long and ardent search ends when his missing head is found impaled atop a bamboo pole. The announcement of the discovery becomes a rallying cry for unity for the demoralized tribe. So "Ulo ng Apo" or head of the Chieftain became the name of the fishing village on the shores of lovely Subic Bay.

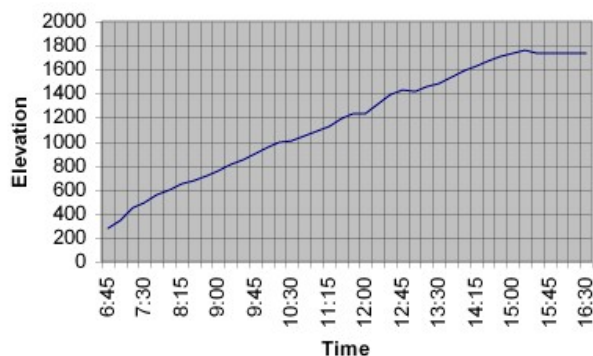
● WHEN AND HOW TO GO

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 11:45 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* (Mr. Lacuesta as of this writing). You can ask for directions from people living in the area. If you have your own vehicle with you, Dampay Salaza is about 5 kilometers from Iba. You have to be careful to look for the right turn to the dirt road to Dampay. If you are not planning to take your car uphill, you can leave it by Kagawad's house. As mentioned, only 4X4s with large clearance can manage the trail uphill.

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.

Mt. Tapulao Climb Chart



● POINTS OF INTEREST

Near Iba Zambales is a popular tourist destination, Subic and Olongapo City. But if you prefer a more rustic quiet place to spend your time, you can drop by at Capones Islands and Pundaquit beach in San Antonio, Zambales.

● SUGGESTED ITINERARY

DAY 1

22:00	Assembly time, Victory Caloocan
23:30	ETD for Iba Zambales

DAY 2

03:00	ETA Iba Zambales. Arrange for trip to Damapay Salaza
04:00	ETD for Dampay Salaza
04:30	ETA Dampay Salaza. Give courtesy call to "Kagawad"
05:30	Start Trek
11:00	ETA Water Source - Lunch Time
12:00	Resume Trek
15:30	ETA Bunker Camp Site
17:00	Dinner
22:00	Light's Out

DAY 3

05:00	Wake-up Call, Breakfast
05:30	Assault Summit for Sunrise viewing
06:00	ETA Summit
07:00	Trek back to campsite
07:30	Campsite, break camp
09:00	Start decent
10:30	Water source- early lunch
11:30	Resume trek
15:00	ETA Dampay Salaza
16:00	ETD for Iba
16:30	Iba, ETD for Manila
21:00	ETA Manila

● PICTURES

Taken by : Arin Desembrana (2001)



Wide Trail to Basecamp



Already above the clouds



Campsite with Bunker at the Back



Wonderful Weather !



Sunrise !!



The trail to the Summit



MMS Camp



Our belles, Naidz, Yeabah, Oyie, Tonie and Audrey

● SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Bring umbrella to protect yourselves from rain and/or sunshine. It will also be convenient if you have the time to climb it in three days instead of two. Also don't forget to bring "winter" clothes for the cool weather. There are water source along the trail and at the "bunker" campsite. The bunker is a large cabin. You can actually use it with permission from the caretaker, that is if he is around to open the bunker. The son of that care taker, Rommel, often accompanies hiker on their trek to the bunker house. Although he is based at Dampay, he considers trekking to the bunker as a fun thing to do. Weird isn't it ?

● CONTACTS

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