



## DESTINATION : MT UGU

<b>LOCATION</b>	Benguet, Nueva Vizcaya Provinces
<b>COORDINATES</b>	16°19'145" N - 120°48'184" E
<b>ELEVATION</b>	2,090 meters above sea level
<b>LEVEL</b>	Major Climb, Level III, Strenuous
<b>DISTINCT CHARACTERISTICS</b>	Scenic Views of Benguet and Nueva Vizcaya
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	Hiking, Mountain Bike
<b>JUMP-OFF POINT</b>	Itogon, Benguet and Kayapa Nueva Vizcaya
<b>AVERAGE DAYS REQUIRED</b>	5 days (including travel time from Manila)
<b>MINIMUM DAYS REQUIRED</b>	4 days (including travel time from Manila)
<b>IT CREATED BY</b>	Long Henson with inputs from Merci Guilas. Directions shared by Chito Razon of PALMC.
<b>DATE LAST UPDATED</b>	August 9, 2001

### **● INFORMATION**

Mt. Ugu is one of the major peaks in the mountainous Benguet and Nueva Vizcaya provinces. The site was discovered as a new hiking destination last 1987 when a PAL plane crashed on one of its slopes. Mountaineers who volunteered on the ensuing rescue operations was awed by the adventure experience of exploring this mountain making it a part of their succeeding explorations. Then for a long time, it was a place known only to a handful until the time when the other mountaineering groups started to re-discover the place.

Mt. Ugu is another proof that the Cordilleras is one of the richest hiking destinations in the country. It is a cross-country hike traversing several territories cutting across the provinces of Benguet and Nueva Vizcaya. It is a part of the "Cordillera Way" which is a series of trails crisscrossing the Cordillera Mountains. In fact you can create other exploration trips within this destination like a Mt. Napulauan-Ugu or a Mt. Ugu-Pulag hikes. The Mt. Ugu hike itself is already visually rewarding and physically challenging enough for you to reconsider the other routes. Nestled between the vast mountain lies the 2,090 high summit of Mt. Ugu. From the summit, you can catch a panoramic view of Mt.Pulag on the North and the Nueva Vizcaya Mountains on the South. It's not only the experience of the Cordillera wilderness that is rewarding but as well as the cultural experience of interacting and passing by the remote villages of Itogon and Kayapa. Definitely Mt. Ugu is a better alternative to Mt. Pulag especially if you want to get away from the "beaten tracks".

## ● LEGENDS

Mountaineers who climb Mt. Ugu bring back stories of ghostly experience they attribute to the victims of the PAL crash site. But as any other ghostly stories, it's up for you to decide what to make up for slightly extra-ordinary experiences. During the two three I had trekked the place, I have never experienced anything that will qualify as such.

## ● WHEN AND HOW TO GO

There are several known routes leading to Mt. Ugu but the ones used by mountaineers is the one via Itogon traversing Luzod then to Domolpos, Nueva Viscaya. This route takes 3 days of trekking. Since there are a lot of established trails used by the natives in the area, it is advisable to hire a guide. A guide can also point out other possible trails, whichever takes the fancy of the group whether the group would like to take the short cut or the longer route passing through several villages. Trekkers are bound to meet villagers on the trail – women carrying sack of rice on top of their head, men with boards of feet of lumber on their shoulder and some are even planting on the slope of the mountain mostly, sweet potato and yams.

From Baguio, hire a jeep that will take you to Tinungdan schoolhouse at Itogon, Benguet. Expect rough, dusty and narrow road going down although some parts of the road are cemented. The views during the trip are spectacular except that some parts have been affected by the bush fires of La Niña 1998. Transit time will be around 1 and a half-hour. Fee for the jeep is Php 600.00/trip. From the roadside, a few minutes trek will take you to the monkey bridge near the schoolhouse. Take an early lunch and refill water before heading for Luzod schoolhouse. Look for Mam Rose to help you find some guides. Put sun block as you will be exposed to midday sun. Trekking will take around 4 hours of picturesque mountains, spectacular view and endless grasslands in hues of green, brown and orange. Take a rest at the covered shade near mango trees. Take time to enjoy the tranquility of the place. You don't get much of this in the city. Along the way, you will see a cemented trough flowing with cold and clear water. Try to wet your head and face to refresh. A water source is nearby, a few minutes after the water trough. Expect the climb to be steeper after this. As your breathing gets labored, view at this height is more breathtaking and the air gets a little chilly. Trail will be wider and lots of pine trees. Some pine trees that you will see are burned by the villagers who spends the night on the trail. As soon as you see a small plateau, you are near the village where the Luzod schoolhouse is. Look for Judy (teacher) and ask permission if they will allow the use of the schoolhouse for the overnight stay. Villagers seldom see mountaineers so be prepared to be stared at, especially by the children. The kids maintain a distance and won't come near you. The kids look like Japanese dolls with chinky eyes, reddish face and ching chop hairstyle. They are content to just look, whisper at each other and giggle. There are enough water for everyone to take a bath that is if you can withstand the freezing water. Temperature is around 15 degrees Celsius. They also have cemented comfort rooms nearby. The houses near the schoolhouse are typically Ifugao style, low ceiling hut with raised floor on four stilts. Look for Mang Gregorio where you have to register and look for a guide. People there speak in Ilokano and some in English and Tagalog. Some of the mountaineers we met say that the logbook was for people who want to make Mt. Ugu as a national park like Mt. Pulag. From Luzod, there are no more water sources so prepare at least 3 liters of water. Expect the terrain to be difficult. There is a sawmill along the way. According to some of them, Americans once occupied it. There are two possible campsites: one is at the summit and the other one is at the shoulder leading near the "helipad" (platform used by the rescuers during the plane crash rescue operations). The best choice is the latter due to its spectacular sunrise amidst cloud covered hills. Rise up early in the morning to see distant peaks jutting out from the clouds that had blanketed the hills beneath. On your way down, it's better to take the other route to Kayapa in Nueva Vizcaya. There are two options in going to Kayapa, either go to Kayapa central or proper. The terrain is mostly steep and the trail is soft clay with loose rocks going to Domolpos. It will take around one hour to reach the village. Before reaching the village, there's a small covered shade. From here, only 30 minutes to reach the village where you can replenish water. Trek from here is more exhausting if the sun is up because it is exposed. After several winding trails and curves, the covered cemented shade is the best place to take lunch and a short rest. From here, the next village is Indupit, around 2

hour's trek. This small community have their own chapel where you can say a little prayer of thanks for having had the opportunity to experience traipsing the remote areas in Benguet which can only be reached by foot, visit the villages, meet the friendly people and commune with nature. Going down to Kayapa will take you about 1 hour. As soon as you enter the village, there are stores and restaurants there that serve halo-halo, soft drinks and meals. From Kayapa, there are two options to go to Baguio (if you choose Baguio over Nueva Vizcaya): the jeep that leaves Kayapa at 7am and the Norton bus that leaves at 8:30am

## ● POINTS OF INTEREST

You will definitely pass by Baguio City either way to Mt. Ugu. From Kayapa, you will pass by Ambuklao Dam.

## ● SUGGESTED ITINERARY

### DAY 1

21:00	ETD Manila to Baguio (Victory Liner, Dagupan, Philippine Rabbit)
-------	--

### DAY 2

05:00	ETA Baguio City. Breakfast. Arrange for transportation to jump-off point at Caltex near Jollibee Session road. Pass by Market for fresh vegetables and fruits.
08:30	ETD Baguio city to jump-off point (Tinongdan Itogon Benguet). Cost of hired jeep at 600 Php (1998). Regular trip at 15 Php per head.
10:00	ETA Jump-off point. You may go there via two possible routes. One would entail you to cross a long monkey bridge to go to Tinongdan school after an hour hike while the other will bring you to Tinongdan School via a bamboo stilt over the river at the other side (10 minutes hike).
11:00	Arrange for guides to Lusod. (It is difficult to get guides, you might opt to ask for instructions instead. But there are many natives who trek from Tinongdan going to Lusod).
11:30	Lunch Break Tinongdan has stores and potable water source.
12:30	Start trek towards Lusod (Cardiac Assault - as termed by PALMC)
14:30	Arrive at closed waiting shed. Water available along open canal but may not be that potable. About 30 minutes hike from closed waiting shed is a natural spring along the trail which is potable.
15:30	Arrive at open waiting shed.
16:30	Arrive at Lusod. Camp at Lusod school grounds.

	Natives will offer the school for your shelter. Water and rest rooms available but no stores.
19:00	Lights out (Temperature 15 C)

**DAY 3**

07:00	Wake-up Call
07:30	Breakfast
08:00	Arrange for guide to Ugu summit. (from Lusod you may trek straight to the summit or go Domolpos and Bakuyan villages then summit assault the next day using day packs. If you choose to go straight to the summit, no water source is available. You can use the Domolpos school house if you choose to go there where water source is available but no stores and you will miss the spectacular sunrise at the summit.) Guide is optional.
10:00	Start trek towards Old Saw Mill.
11:00	ETA Old Saw Mill (court yard built in pre war times).
12:00	Lunch on trail.
13:00	Resume trek. Prepare for the wonderful panoramic views on summer, fogs and flowers on rainy season. Be careful on some grazing bulls which may attack without provocation.
16:30	ETA Summit. You can camp at the summit but there are better camp sites.
17:00	Start trek to campsite. The helipad is an option as your campsite near the 1987 PAL plane crash site, but if you do, you will have to go straight to Kayapa Central the next day. One recommended campsite is in the shoulder on your way to the crash site. Then hike back to Domolpos the next day going down. Morning sunrise is wonderful !
19:00	Lights Out. (Temperature 11 C)

**DAY 4**

07:00	Wake-up Call/ Breakfast
09:00	Start Trek towards Kayapa. (Two routes are available going home, Kayapa Proper and Kayapa Central. Kayapa proper is nearer but if you take the crash site route, you have no choice but go to Kayapa Central). Kayapa is in Nueva Vizcaya.
10:00	Pass by Domolpos Houses. Refill your bottles.
12:30	ETA Waiting shed after long mountain hike. Lunch
13:00	Resume Trek.
14:00	ETA Ansipsip waiting shed, Mt. Samento

15:00	ETA Indupit Village. Water source available but no stores.
16:30	ETA Kayapa town proper. Ask for permission from the Mayor/ Vice-Mayor or Barangay Captain (the higher the better) to use the school grounds for camping. Stores, restaurants available. Check for Bus schedule for next day's trip.
19:00	Light's Out

**DAY 5**

06:00	Wake-up Call
06:30	Breakfast
10:00	ETD Kayapa Proper to Baguio. Baguio is the most convenient way going home. But you may take the jeep towards Aritao, or San Jose Nueva Vizcaya then to Manila. From Kayapa you may trek Mt. Pulog, Mt. Napulauan or the Banaue Rice Terraces.
13:30	ETA Baguio City
17:00	ETD Baguio City for Manila
22:00	ETA Manila

**PICTURES**

Photos by : Arin Desembrana (2001)



Hot open trail to Lusod



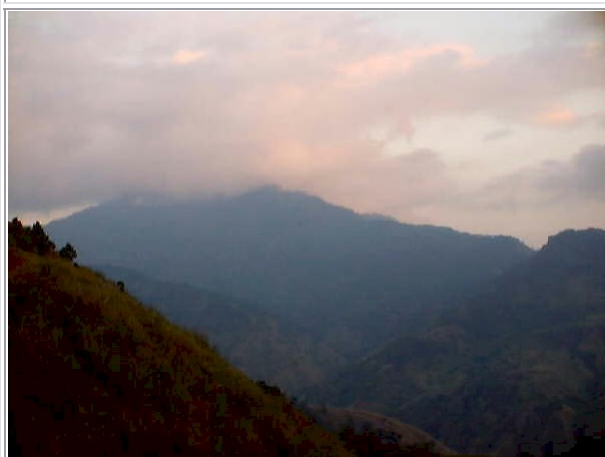
Lusod Village



Awesome viewpoint to Lusod



Like ants on an Ant Hill



Were in the Middle of Nowhere



Crossing Mountains (Saddle)

## ● CHARTS

Tinugdan	N 16 21 838	E 120 43 307
Water Way	N 16 21 132	E 120 44 427
Lusod (Camp 1)	N 16 21 273	E 120 46 201
SUMMIT	N 16 19 145	E 120 48 184
Campsite	N 16 18 778	E 120 47 761
Mt. Samento	N 16 20 687	E 120 50 746
Indupit Village	N 16 20 821	E 120 51 671
Kayapa Town Proper	N 16 21 530	E 120 52 458

## ● SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no permits required in climbing Mt. Ugu. Potable water sources are available on specific locations. During summer, the area is exposed so prepare yourself from the heat of the sun.

Here is an E-mail from Tonyboy of AMCI re: Suggestion on Climbing Ugu :

You may want to try an IT that's easier when you climb Mt. Ugu. At AMCI, we take a bus to Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya then a jeep/truck to Kayapa. We register there and start the climb to Indupit. We load up water and go to Domolpos Saddle and do the ascent to the summit on that same day. Camp at the summit. The next day descend towards the school at Bgy Tinongdan, Lusod. Go past the school and camp at a campsite which we call Bajay's campsite (Jay de Guzman '92). On the third day descend towards the school. Take a jeep to Baguio which will only take about an hour. The 2nd and the 3rd day hikes are what we consider a "walk in the park."

Tonyboy  
AMCI 071-99

## CONTACTS

**Waiver** : Although the author have tried to make the information in this itinerary as accurate as possible; time changes policies, inflation/cost and even the physical condition of places mentioned here thereby we accept no responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person who used this itinerary. You may contact the resources listed in the contacts section of this itinerary or via the directories section of this website to make your trip as more accurate.

We appreciate comments and/or corrections for the updating of this itinerary to make it as accurate as possible. We would also welcome your submissions or contributions of other itineraries not listed in this website for other people to learn and enjoy. Credits will be given to the contributor. Contact e-mail : [long2@rocketmail.com](mailto:long2@rocketmail.com)

All rights reserved. No part of this itinerary may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise except brief extracts for the purpose of review, without the written permission of the copyright owner. Since it is a common practice among mountaineering communities to create written itineraries of activities, special permission will be given for the reproduction of this itinerary for such purpose with the condition of indicating the source: MMS and author: Long Henson as well as the mention of the waiver indicated herein.