



MT. MALINDANG NATURAL PARK

► By **ROLANDO DINGAL** and **JOJI BALCITA**

General Information

Mt. Malindang Natural Park lies within the Malindang mountain range in Mindanao, straddling the provinces of Misamis Occidental, Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga del Sur. It covers over 34,000 hectares. Its highest peak is at 2,402 meters above sea level.

The Park's allure comes from its waterfalls, crater lake and dense virgin forests which host diverse and rare species of flora and fauna. A variety of trees - large, straight-trunked evergreens, igem and almaciga grow in the lower parts of its forests while dwarf and crooked stem trees crowd the mossy forest found in the mountain's upper parts. The rare and endangered Philippine Eagle, Flying Lemur, Deer, Tarsier, and Hornbills live in the Park. Other significant species found there include mammals such as the Philippine Deer, Wild Pig, Long-tailed Macaque, Palm Civet and Civet Cat. Moreover, the Park is known to be home of six amphibians, three reptiles, 67 birds and 25 mammals which are endemic to the place.

Sixteen major rivers trace their sources from the Park. Over one million people living in the three provinces depend on these waters for domestic and industrial purposes, as well as for farming of coconut, rice, root crops, vegetables, legumes, cacao and coffee.

The indigenous people known as Subanen are believed to have occupied the mountain since time immemorial. Today, they live within and around the Park, practice slash-and-burn farming and have retained their distinct customs and traditions.

Reaching Oroquieta City, Misamis Occidental

Depending on the sites to be visited, visitors can enter the Park through different routes.

They, however, need to report first at the Protected Area Office located close to the Provincial Capitol compound, in Oroquieta City.



Traveling by air and land

From Metro Manila, take a Philippine Airlines [02.8150054] flight to Dipolog City (plane leaves daily), then a 3 ½ hours travel by land to Oroquieta City. A round trip airfare costs P 5,891. One-way land fare costs P70 -P100.

An alternative route is via Cagayan de Oro. Take Philippines Airlines or Cebu Pacific [02.6364938] flight to Cagayan de Oro City (plane leaves daily), then another 4 hours travel by land to Oroquieta City. Round trip air fares cost around PhP 6,100 and PhP 5,350, respectively. One-way bus fare costs around P100.00

Traveling by air and sea

From Manila, take a Philippine Airlines flight to Cebu City. From the airport take a taxi to the Cebu port where a ferry leaves for Ozamiz City for an overnight trip. Then take a bus which goes to Oroquieta City. A roundtrip air fare costs about PhP 5,000. The taxi ride costs about PhP 60. Ferry fare is around PhP 310 for economy, PhP 650 to PhP 700 per person for cabins, PhP 1,620 for a suite and PhP507 for tourist class. For the bus fare, it is PhP 20 per person for the regular trip and PhP 30 per person in an air-conditioned van.

Traveling by sea

Boat travel takes two days from Metro Manila to Ozamiz City, then about 45 minutes to Oroquieta City. W G & A Superferry [02.894321 1] has boats that leave every Thursdays and Sundays. Fares range from PHP 1,340 per person (economy) to PHP 1,950 per person (first class).

Protected Area Office

The Protected Area Office [Tel.: 088-5312184; Fax: 088-5312150; E-mail: mmnp@ozamiz.com] is located at Oroquieta City at the back of the Provincial Capitol. It is

responsible for implementing the management policy of the Park. The following guidelines are set for visitors:

- Secure a mountaineering permit from the PA Office before entering the Park. Provide information on the number of climbers, site to be visited, purpose and duration of visit.
- Pass only through existing foot trails.
- Provide or hire competent guides.
- Avoid picking or gathering plants and catching of animals.
- Avoid throwing garbage or wrappers in the vicinity. Bring your own garbage with you when you leave the Park.
- Respect the natives, their culture and traditions.
- Camp only in designated areas.

Local Eco-tourism Destinations and Cultural Activities

Lake Duminagat. It is named after the crater lake and its clear waters. It is nested within a dense forest hosting wildlife such as deer, monkeys and wild boars. The place is two to three hours hike from the Nueva Vista, Don Victoriano road. Visitors can camp in the barangay proper.

Lake Duminagat is the home of the Subanen. Visitors can learn of their traditions and beliefs provided one is willing to stay long enough with them.

From here, one can go down to Oroquieta City passing through the **hot sulfur spring** at Barangay Sebuca, then proceed to Barangay Toliyok through a foot trail that crosses the Oroquieta River several times at different points. Hikers can also exit to Tonggo, Tudela, Misamis Occidental passing through Barangay Liboron and crossing the mountain range.

Hoyohoy. Located at Tangub City, the area is accessible by a 30-minute ride from the City proper. From here, one can have a grand view of the urban centers of Ozamiz and Tangub, the Panguil Bay and part of Lanao del Norte.

Mt. Kolub kawa. Here, one can enjoy a cool and refreshing atmosphere under a forest canopy, or observe Serpent Eagles and Hombills.

Regina natural pool. A natural swimming pool emanating from the cool springs of Calusaran, Barrio Bagakay, Ozamiz City, 3 km away from the city proper.

Barangay Peneil (Lopez Jaena). The area is known for its panoramic view.

Bulawis Spring. Located in Barangay Bunawan, Calamba. With several mini-waterfalls and numerous springs, this spot has been developed into a swimming area.

Imeldanita Falls. Located in Barangay Tabina in the municipality of Sapang Dalaga. The falls are 60 feet high and are surrounded by trees and boulders.

Sibucal Hot Spring. A natural hot spring located at Barangay Sibucal, Oroquieta City. It is about 30 km away from the city proper.

Old Spanish Catholic Church. Located in Barangay Taraka, Poblacion Jimenez, this church has the grandeur of most early Spanish churches.

Pipe Organ from Germany. Housed at the Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Cathedral in Ozamiz City, it is the biggest of its kind in Mindanao and second largest in the Philippines. The giant pipe organ is equipped with 1,936 pipes, a console with three keyboards, 30 stop and an electric bulb.

Fort Santiago (Fort of Señora de la Concepcion of del Triunfo de Pangusi). An old Spanish Fort built in 1707 to protect this region from pirates, it is a few meters away from the wharf. It has been declared a historical landmark.

Bukagan Hill. It stands sentry over Ozamiz City. A spiral road takes you to the top, 92 meters above sea level. The chimes from its four giants bells can be heard as far as Kolambugan, Baroy and Tubod across tranquil Panguil Bay. Stations of the Cross and other facilities are being proposed for development in the area.

Malindang Country Golf Course. A pre-war Army Cadre, it is now a golf course lush with well-maintained greens, located at the foot of Malindang Mountain. It is a 3-kilometer ride from Ozamiz City.

Naomi's Botanical Garden. It is a 13-hectare farm, located in Banadero, Ozamiz City where ornamental plants, bonsai, orchids, grafted fruits, seedlings and doves could be found. Ceramic products are also for sale here.

Other beautiful sites include *Makatagbaw Falls* in Mapurog, Bonifacio; *Tulubong Falls* in Roxas, Aloran; *Tinagbasan Falls* in Tuminawan, Oroquieta City; *Kalutongan Falls* in Jimenez; *Malindang Peak, Mt. Ampiro,* and *North Peak.* The trails going to the North Peak are long and difficult and are recommended only for skilled or trained mountaineers.

Park Entrance Fees

The following park entrance fees are to be paid at the Protected Area Office in Oroquieta City:

Students	: P 10 per person
Adults	: P 50 per person
Foreigners	: P 200 per person

Best Time to Visit

The best time to visit is during the months of January to April when the trails are dry and mountain leeches will not be much of a nuisance to climbers. Visiting the Park during rainy season is not advisable due to muddy and slippery trails.

Accommodation in the Lowlands

New Plaza Beatriz Hotel [088.521 1394 to 95] in Port Road, Ozamiz City offers accommodation ranging from PhP 600 to PhP 1,200.

Tatong's Beach Resort [0918.4604493] in San Vicente Alto, Oroquieta City offers clean cottages at the beachfront in Oroquieta City for PhP 1,250. The resort facilities include a swimming pool, an ample conference hall and smaller meeting rooms.

Casa Kristina, a hotel and restaurant along Layawan River offers rooms ranging from PhP 600 to PhP1,600.

Where to eat in the lowlands

Those who like seafood should visit RS Ihaw-Ihaw in Gomez St. Juan Luna, Ozamiz City.

Other good restaurants found in Oroquieta City include Tatong's Beach Resort and Restaurant serving Filipino dishes and seafood; Chopsticks Restaurant and Karen's Food House both in Independent St. offering affordable Filipino dishes; and Dong Pedro's Lechon Manok in Independence St., Capitol Drive specializes in grilled chicken (take-out counter only).

Facilities within the Park

There are neither accommodation nor food facilities located within the Park. Visitors are advised to bring tents, sleeping bags and foodstuff. Overnight stays are allowed in designated campsites such as Barangay Lake Duminagat and Sebuca. **S**

Rolando Dingal, Protected Area Superintendent,
Mt. Malindang; Joji Balcita, Environmental Writer