

A Guide to Lower Peirce Trail



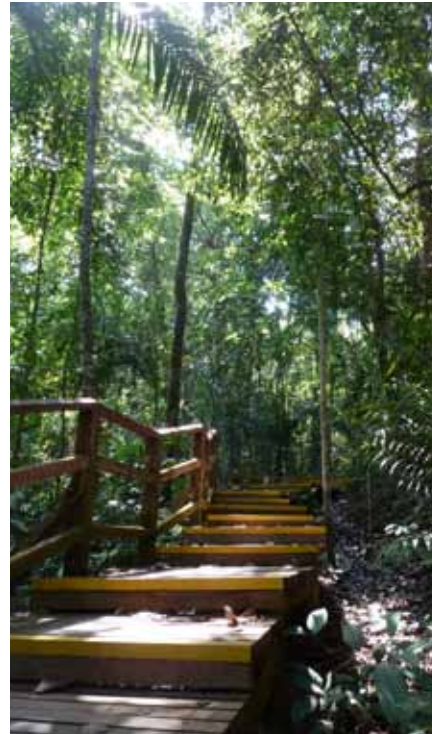
This series of boardwalks through the Central Catchment Nature Reserve brings you through one of Singapore's last remaining mature secondary forests and along the edge of Lower Peirce Reservoir.

You can find rubber trees and oil palms within the Reserve as the plot of land adjacent to it was formerly a rubber plantation. This area is not only known for its former rubber plantations but the existing Old Upper Thomson Road used to be Singapore's first race track for racing cars.

This is a relatively simple walk, suitable for families with young children and the elderly. Start your walk near house no. 72 along Old Upper Thomson Road at the Casuarina Entrance. Shaded by the forest, the walk is pleasantly cool.

There are informative signboards along the boardwalk that tell you more about the flora and fauna of this forest.

The forest is home to more than 900 flowering plants, 100 ferns and 250 animal species. You may encounter various kinds of wildlife from mammals to birds, and enjoy wonderful panoramas of waters surrounded by a luxuriant forest. On occasion, around noon, you might see White-bellied Fish Eagles soaring in the sky and over the waters of the reservoir.



Estimated average walking time:
45 minutes to 1 hour

Distance: 900m

Level of difficulty: Easy



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Highlights

- An easy 900m wooden boardwalk through a mature secondary forest
- Peaceful walk by the water's edge
- Symphony of nature's music in the background
- Sightings of native animals like the Clouded Monitor Lizard, Common Sun Skink, Plantain Squirrel and Long-tailed Macaque
- Occasional glimpses of native birds like the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Striped Tit-babbler and Olive-winged Bulbul

How to get to Lower Peirce Trail

By Car:

Follow the direction of Upper Thomson Road. Turn left before the traffic lights at the junction of Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1 into Old Upper Thomson Road. Follow the road until you see the entrance of the trail. Parking facilities are available along the road near the Casuarina Entrance.

By Bus:

Bus nos. 163, 167, 169, 855, 980.

Alight at the bus stop nearest to the Sembawang Hill Food Court and walk along Old Upper Thomson Road towards Lower Peirce Reservoir Park. The entrance to the trail (Casuarina Entrance) is about five minutes away.



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What you can see on the trail

→ 1 **Plantain Squirrel (*Callosciurus notatus*) and Slender Squirrel (*Sundasciurus tenuis*)**

You are likely to see some squirrels, even at close range. It may be hard to think of the cute squirrel as a rodent but it does, in fact, belong to the rodent family. The **Plantain Squirrel** is found in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand in a wide range of habitats: forests, mangroves, parks, gardens and agricultural areas. In Singapore, they are widely seen in parks, gardens and the nature reserves.

See if you can tell the **Slender Squirrel** from the Plantain Squirrel. It is a slightly smaller creature, with a more slender tail. Its body is brown on the upper part and light grey on the under side. Its diet consists mostly of leaves and fruits, but it also eats insects and bird eggs. It can eat fruits much bigger than itself, such as mangoes, jackfruits or coconuts. Unlike the Plantain Squirrel, the Slender Squirrel is not as common and can only be found in more mature forests like those found in the nature reserves.

→ 2 **Clouded Monitor Lizard (*Varanus nebulosus*) and Malayan Water Monitor (*Varanus salvator*)**

If you look among the leaf litter on the forest floor, you may be able to see the **Clouded Monitor Lizard** foraging for food. Its sharp claws make it a good climber so do not be surprised to see a large lizard climbing up a tree.

Another monitor lizard you can see is the **Malayan Water Monitor**. It is a strong swimmer as well as an agile climber. In water, it glides gracefully and can remain submerged for long periods. It is distinguished from other monitors by the position of its nostrils which lie near the tip of the snout. It can grow up to more than 2 metres long and is often mistaken for a crocodile.

→ 3 **Long-tailed Macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*)**

You may come across the **Long-tailed Macaques**, also known as **Crab-eating Macaques**. They are distinguished by their extraordinarily long tails. Long-tailed Macaques live in primary, secondary, coastal, mangrove, swamp, and riverine forests. They are wild animals and are well-adapted to find food in the forests. Remember not to feed them as doing so will alter their natural behaviour and make them reliant on people for food. The macaques are also very important to the forests as they are the only remaining large seed dispersers. If the macaques do not forage in the forest, the forest will have difficulty regenerating because of the absence of adequate seed dispersers.

→ 4 **Common Sun Skink (*Eutropis multifasciata*)**

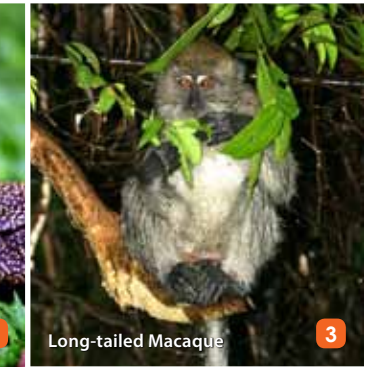
The **Common Sun Skink** can often be seen slithering among the undergrowth and leaf litter. In Singapore it is widespread in wooded areas, mangroves and parks. The skink has a long body, covered with shiny, smooth scales. It can move very quickly and is generally shy, scurrying away quickly if you are noisy. On a nice sunny day, you are very likely to spot them basking contentedly in the sun.



Plantain Squirrel 1



Clouded Monitor Lizard 2



Long-tailed Macaque 3



Slender Squirrel (Photo by Alan Yeo)



Malayan Water Monitor



Common Sun Skink 4

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→ 5

Forest Birds

Forest birds here include the **Greater Racket-tailed Drongos** (*Dicrurus paradiseus*), babblers, barbets, cuckoos, flowerpeckers and sunbirds. There are also raptors – birds of prey that soar above the canopy.

The **White-bellied Fish Eagle** (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*), which is one of Singapore's largest birds of prey, can sometimes be seen flying majestically over the reservoir from the trail. Along the trail, kingfishers can be heard calling nearby. While the birds feed on fish, they are also known to feed on geckos, mantids and other creatures more typically associated with the forest.

Along the water edge, watch the dragonflies and pond-skaters flit in and out of the water. Butterflies and other small creatures also abound in the colourful wild vegetation that proliferate along the water's edge.

→ 6

Tree Ferns and Palms

The **Cyathea latebrosa** is a type of tree fern and you can see many along the trail. You can tell them apart easily as they have a single tall stem.

The **Nibong Palm** (*Oncosperma tigillarium*) has many thorns on its trunk. It is a multi-purpose tree: the shoots can be cooked as vegetables; the stems can be as fish traps, timber piles, fencing, and jetty posts, *kelong* stilts or house posts; and the hard

outer wood can be used on decorative wall panels and floor boards. Many handicraft items such as large wooden spoons or ladles, chopsticks, bangles and key chains are produced using the Nibong wood.

The *Orang Asli*, indigenous people of the Malayan region, are known to use the spikes as poisoned darts for the hunting of animals.

→ 7

Leaf Litter Plant (*Agrostistachys longifolia*)

The **Leaf Litter Plant** is a fascinating tree of the forest. This amazing understory "treelet" with a single trunk has long, narrow and spirally arranged leaves that trap falling leaves. As the fallen leaves decompose, the nutrients released are absorbed directly into the plant for its growth.

→ 8

Mahang (*Macaranga bancana*)

The **Ant Plant** or the **Mahang** is a home for ants. The ant and this plant have a symbiotic relationship. The ant depends on this plant for its food while the plant is protected from being eaten up by other insects by the resident ant.

→ 9

Lianas

Lianas or woody vines can be found in plenty here as well. They are only found in mature forests so you can tell that this stretch of forest is very old.

This walk may be short but it is very picturesque as you get to walk over streams and rippling brooks. As you



Greater Racket-tailed Drongo



Olive-backed Sunbird
(Photo by Yang Chen)

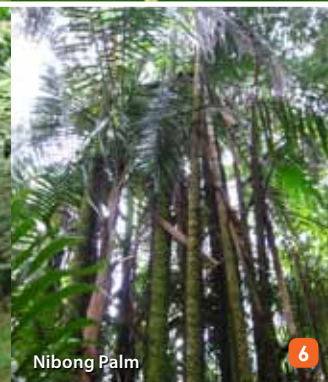


White-bellied Fish Eagle

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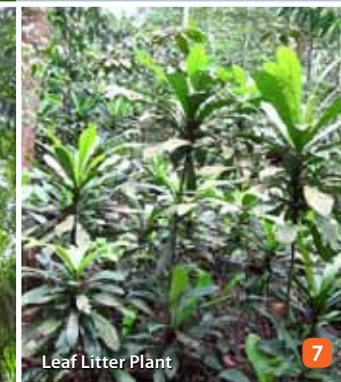


Tree Ferns



Nibong Palm

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Leaf Litter Plant

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Mahang

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Lianas

9



emerge from the forest to your first view of the reservoir, it is quite a spectacular sight and you are likely to marvel at the beauty of the scenery.

Finish your walk at the Lower Peirce Reservoir Park. Relax and take the time to enjoy the quiet and the beautiful scenery. For those who prefer the bustle of the coffee shops, head for one nearby for your fix of local fare and a steaming cup of coffee or tea.

We hope you have enjoyed your walk on this trail. To get acquainted with more nature, head to the Walking Trail at the TreeTop Walk. To obtain another DIY trail-guide on a walking trail in one of Singapore's parks, visit www.nparks.gov.sg/eguides.