

A Guide to Prunus Trail at the MacRitchie Boardwalks



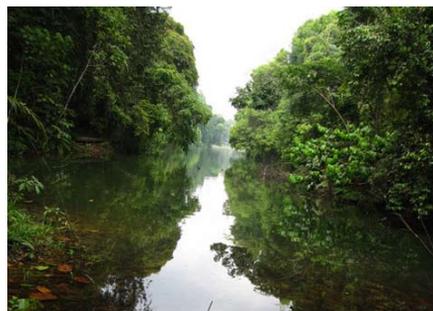
Surrounded by more than 500ha of primary and secondary forests in the Catchment Nature Reserve, MacRitchie Reservoir is Singapore's oldest reservoir.

Prunus Trail starts near the entrance of MacRitchie Nature Trail from MacRitchie Reservoir Park. This is at the eastern end of the reservoir. It is the shorter boardwalk, part of Prunus-Petai Trail and is a relatively easy trail. To get to the trail from the amenities centre, head towards your right and get on the footpath that skirts the edge of the reservoir. Follow this footpath until you reach the boardwalks.

This trail ends at the junction of Petai Trail and MacRitchie Nature Trail. You can opt to continue on the boardwalk via Petai Trail, or trek back to MacRitchie Reservoir Park via MacRitchie Nature Trail. If you choose to walk on to Petai Trail, a relatively quiet trail, you will be able to see more wildlife. The end of Petai Trail links to MacRitchie Nature Trail. You can walk along MacRitchie Nature Trail back to MacRitchie Reservoir Park.

Aside from the intriguing plants and trees, keep a lookout for native creatures of the forest. Tread softly. Talk quietly. You will be rewarded with sights of the Common Sun Skink, Clouded Monitor Lizard and Oriental Whip Snake basking in the sun, Plantain and Slender squirrels leaping gracefully from tree to tree, a cheeky Long-tailed Macaque or two.

Look up and you may see a White-bellied Fish Eagle soaring through the skies. It is easily recognisable by its V-shaped profile. Amidst the tree canopies, you might be able to catch glimpses of the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Pink-necked Green Pigeon and even a Banded Woodpecker. Near the water's edges, you will be able to spot resident birds like the Collared Kingfisher and White-throated Kingfisher. If you are more interested in butterflies, the Banded Imperial and Common Grass Yellow can be found prancing amidst the lower strata of the forest.



MacRitchie's rainforests

Most of MacRitchie is covered with secondary forest tree species but it still nurtures some of the last precious patches of primary rainforests in Singapore. Native species, like Gaharu (*Aquilaria malaccensis*) and *Sterculia* species, are part of this lush habitat. The presence of non-native tree species like rubber trees and Jambu Ayer – signs of past disturbance – in no way detracts from the majesty of the pristine forest ecosystem that once covered the whole island of Singapore in the 1800s.

The rainforests today house precious habitats for a vast array of flora and fauna. Human activities, such as poaching and pollution, upset the balance and wellbeing of these habitats. Let's do our part to minimize disturbances to the rainforests by avoiding such activities. In doing so, we are helping to conserve this rich biodiversity, our ecological heritage, for future generations.

Distance : 3km
Walking time : About 1 hour



Singapore Rhododendron (flowers)



White-throated Kingfisher



Long-Tailed Macaque



Chestnut Tree (*Castanopsis schefferiana*)



Banded Woodpecker



Tembusu flower

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Highlights

- Beautiful views of the reservoir against the backdrop of dense rainforest
- A close encounter with interesting trees and plants along the trail
- Sights of native creatures of the forest like the Common Sun Skink, Clouded Monitor Lizard, Orange-bellied and Slender squirrels and Long-tailed Macaque
- Occasional glimpses of native birds like the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Pink-necked Green Pigeon, Banded Woodpecker, Collared Kingfisher and White-throated Kingfisher.

How to get to MacRitchie Park

By Bus:
Take bus no. 52, 74, 93, 130, 132, 156, 157, 162, 165, 166, 167, 852, 855 or 980. Alight along Lornie Road at the bus-stop in front of MacRitchie Reservoir Park.

By car:
The entrance to the MacRitchie Reservoir Park car park is along Lornie Road.



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What you can see on this trail

→ 1 Singapore Rhododendron (*Melastoma malabathricum*)

Once you step on the Prunus boardwalk, you will notice a shrub with pretty pink flowers and lush green leaves on your left. This is the Singapore Rhododendron (*Melastoma malabathricum*), from which Poh Chai pills, the traditional Chinese medicine that Mum prescribes whenever you have an upset tummy, are made.

→ 2 Rubber Tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*)

This stretch was once a rubber plantation. Look out for the Rubber Tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*) with its distinctive trifoliate leaves (each leaf is made of three leaflets).

→ 3 'Ant Plant' (*Macaranga bancana*)

Keep your eyes near the forest floor and you will notice the 'Ant Plant' (*Macaranga bancana*), nature's home for ants living in the hollow of the plant. These ants protect the plant from pesky caterpillars while the plant provides the ants with the food that it needs.

The above symbiotic relationship epitomises the co-dependence of flora and fauna in a balanced ecosystem. As we walk through the rainforest,

let's help maintain this healthy ecosystem by minimizing acts that disturb the habitat, such as the indiscriminate spraying of insect repellants.

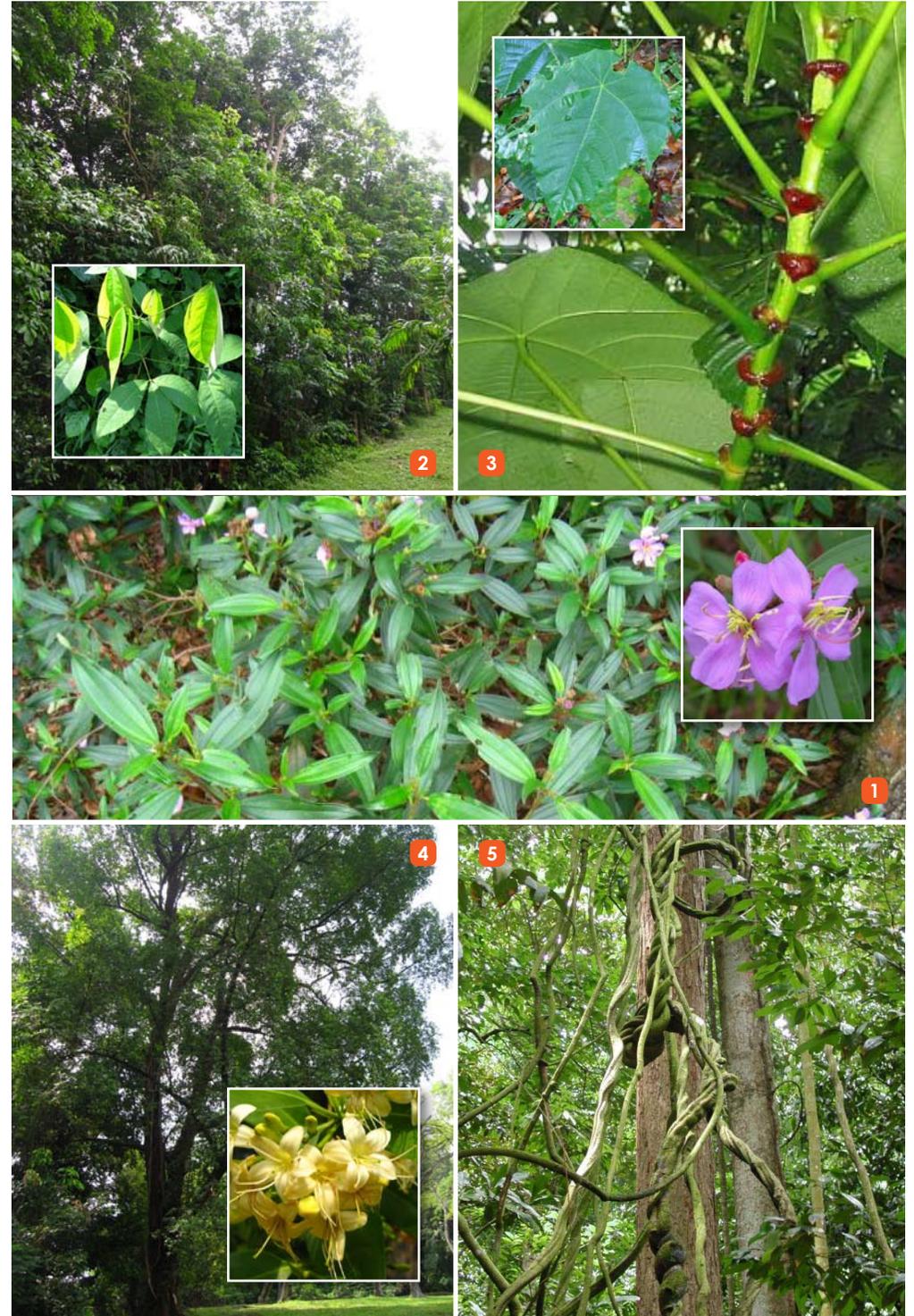
→ 4 Tembusu (*Fagraea fragrans*)

Look on your left to find the tall Tembusu tree leaning slightly over the water's edge. If it looks familiar, it could be because you have seen it countless times on your \$5 note. The trunk of this tree has deep distinctive grooves. Nature has given the trunk anti-bacterial properties that make it ideal as chopping boards in the days when wooden boards were the norm.

When its flowers are in bloom, they give off a strong fragrance which accounts for its scientific name - *Fagraea fragrans*. Pasir Panjang Road has a stretch lined with Tembusu trees and when the flowers are in bloom, wind your windows down to catch a whiff of its wonderful fragrance.

→ 5 Lianas

You will be forgiven for thinking you are in Tarzan's territory at some point when you spot lianas, the woody climbers of the forest. This stretch of forest is very old - you can tell this because lianas are only found in old forests and you can see many of these vines here.



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Nibong Palm (*Oncosperma tigillarium*)

The Nibong Palm (*Oncosperma tigillarium*) looks like the normal palm until you look closely at its trunks – you can see has spikes growing on them! The Nibong Palm is the fisherman's friend. The slender trunks of this palm, amazingly resilient and rot-resistant, are used to make the stilts of kelongs. The spikes are used as needles for fishermen to sew and mend their nets.

→ 7

Leaf Litter Plant (*Agrostistachys longifolia*)

Prunus Trail continues into Petai Trail. You will see the Leaf Litter Plant (*Agrostistachys longifolia*) which grows profusely under the shade of taller trees. When you see Leaf Litter Plants growing, you can tell that this is a good forest with enough dark shade.

→ 8

Petai (*Parkia speciosa*)

Walking along Petai Trail is like going down a culinary trail. Several plants, like the Forest Beans or the Petai (*Parkia speciosa*), are edible. We eat the seeds of this tree, raw, grilled or blanched. The beans taste like garlic and have a very strong and pervasive odour.

→ 9

Chestnut Tree (*Castanopsis schefferiana*)

You may be surprised to see this Chestnut Tree (*Castanopsis schefferiana*) here. The Chestnut Tree is actually a member of the Oak family. The species found along this trail is closely related to the imported chestnuts sold in our markets.

→ 10

'Cheng Tng' Tree (*Scaphium macropodum*)

The Malay name for this 'Cheng Tng' Tree (*Scaphium macropodum*) is Kembang Semangkok (meaning 'fill a cup'). The ripe seeds, when soaked in a cup of water overnight, give rise to a brown spongy jelly that swells to fill the cup, hence the name. If you have eaten cheng tng (a local dessert), you would have tasted this brown spongy jelly, which is incidentally very nutritious.

We hope you enjoyed your walk on this trail. For another intimate encounter with flora and fauna in MacRitchie's rainforests, embark on The Chemperai Trail at The MacRitchie Boardwalks.



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