

# MT. ISAROG

## NATURAL PARK

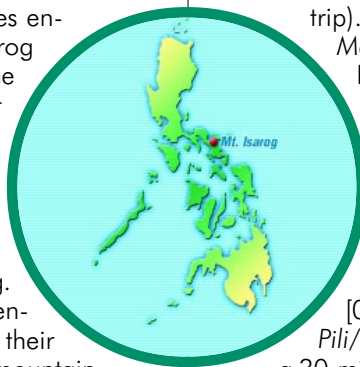
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### General Information

Mt. Isarog, an inactive volcano, rises in the heart of the province of Camarines Sur, the central part of the Bicol Peninsula about 450 kilometers south of Manila. It is the highest forested peak in Southern Luzon.

The Park, 10,112 hectares wide, has a rich diversity of flora and fauna. It is home to at least 143 kinds of birds, 15 of which are endemic to Luzon including a sub-species of the Velvet-fronted Nuthatch which is found only in Mt. Isarog. Other species endemic to the mountain are the Mt. Isarog Shrew Mouse, Isarog Striped Shrew Rat, the Isarog Shrew Rat and the Isolated Forest Frog. Rich in diversity, the park harbors 1,300 known species of plants including hardwood trees, mosses, ferns and orchids. Mammals found in the area include, among others, the Philippine deer, monkeys, bats, wildcat and wild pig.

Most residents of the 23 barangays encompassing portions of the Park derive their livelihood directly or indirectly from the mountain forest which functions like a sponge feeding watercourses leading to the downhill plains. Non-timber forest products like ferns, vines, wild fruits, medicinal plants, honey, fish, cogon grass, rattan, vines, bamboo, nito, almaciga resin, pandan and anahaw are used by residents to meet their domestic needs, sold to complement household income or used as raw materials for handicraft production. Sugarcane, abaca, coconut and rice are the main agro-industrial crops grown at the foothills of the mountain. Indigenous Peoples belonging to the Agta-Tabangnon and Agta-Cimarron groups are settled in some barangays. They depend mainly on subsistence farming of corn, rootcrops, fruit trees and on providing labor in industrial plantations.



### Reaching the Park from Metro Manila

The Park can be reached from Manila via Naga City by air and bus.

**Metro Manila – Pili (Naga City) by air:** Philippine Airlines [02.8558888] and Asian Spirit [02.8403811 to 14] has regular flights to Naga City. The airport is located in Pili, some 30 minutes from Naga City. The flight lasts 35 to 60 minutes depending on the aircraft, and costs around P 2,500.00 to P 3,000.00 (round trip).

**Metro Manila – Pili (Naga City) by road:** Different bus companies ply the route along Maharlika highway. It takes 9 to 12 hours to reach destination. A one-way fare costs from P300.00 to P500.00 depending on the company and quality of transport. The most important liners are Philtranco [02.8518075,8518079], JB Lines [02.8340927] and Tritran [02.9251758].

**Pili/Naga to the park:** From the airport, take a 30-minute jeep ride (P 5.00) that will take you to the Naga City market. From the bus station, take a tricycle (P 3.50) to the same destination.

Jeepneys stationed near the Naga City market leave for Barangay Panicuason/Carolina. After a 5-km, 30-minute ride (P11.00), get off at the Girl Scout of the Philippines office in Panicuason and walk the road leading to the Protected Area Office.

### Protected Area Office

The Mt. Isarog Protected Area Office is responsible for the administration of the Park. It has an extension office [054.472-8018] at the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) in Panganiban Drive, Naga City.

Research and information centers, museum and a training hall are part of the Protected Area Office compound. The gate has a ticket booth where visitors pay upon entering the Park.

The Office employs rangers tasked to apprehend violators, do surveillance and monitoring activities, promote and inform people on environmental issues, guide and assist visitors, conduct research, monitor and control forest fires and perform many other tasks.

### Local Ecotourism Destinations and Cultural Activities

**Mt. Isarog Summit.** An 8-10 hour hike from Barangay Panicuason offers an unforgettable view of the crater and plains of the Bicol Peninsula. Hikers follow the Panicuason trail which leads through the mossy forest. At higher elevations, trees are dwarfed and twisted by the climate and strong winds. The trail has six campsites located at different elevations. Camp One is an hour's hike from Panicuason. Hikers are advised to bring their own water for this hike. From Camp One up to Camp Six, drinking water can be availed from clean streams and waterfalls along the way.

**Malabsay Falls.** Visiting the Park will not be complete without admiring the Malabsay Falls near the Park entrance, where visitors can have picnics and swim.

**Nabuntulan Spring.** Near Malabsay Falls, it can be reached by following a forested mountain trail.

**Magragobrob Waterfalls.** Located inside the crater of Mt. Isarog in Barangays Aroro and San Pedro, Goa. Sulfuric water emanates from this 40-meter waterfall which drains into the Rangas River. Mountaineers coming down from the summit along the Panicuason trail, rest here.

**Consocep Mountain Resort.** Located at Barangay Tigaon adjacent to the Park boundary. The Tumaguiti and Bulalacao waterfalls and four smaller ones are found here. A well-maintained path leads from the car park to the falls. Close to the river are small areas specially designed for rest and recreation.

**Hiwacloy Sulfur Springs.** Located at Barangay Hiwacloy, Goa. Their warm sulfuric spring water is known to cure skin diseases and other minor ailments.

**World War II Tunnels.** Constructed by Japanese soldiers in barangays Tinangis and Curry in Pili and in Del Rosario and Guinaban in Ocampo. Consult local barangay captains before venturing into the "unknown".

**Slide Falls in Curry.** Located at Pili, the falls can be sighted from the Quirino highway. The falls are believed to hold Japanese treasure within its vicinity.



**Deer Farm.** Established by the Provincial Government in Barangay Consocep, it hosts five different species of Australian deer. The Government intends to venture into a full-scale trading of deer meat, leather and antlers.

**Butterfly Farm.** A garden in the provincial capitol in Pili known for its wide variety of flowers and butterflies.

**Market in Naga City.** A cornucopia of native handicrafts and delicacies are found here: Pili sweets, abaca mats, slippers and home decors.

### Entrance Fees

Entrance Fees are paid at the Park entrance gate in barangay Panicuason. Filipinos pay P5.00, while foreigners US\$10. Those wanting to spend the night at the Protected Area Office have to add P30.00 (professionals) and P10.00 (students)

### Best Time to Visit

Visitors can best hike through Mt. Isarog's forests during the dry period occurring from January to April. In the lowlands, the temperature ranges from 20.8 °C in February to 33.6 °C in May. It decreases by 0.6°C for every 100-meter climb to the top.

### Accommodation

The city proper has many pension houses but travelers will appreciate the ones located outside the city. Villa Caceres [054.736530-33; 732339-40; 733786-87] is five minutes away, along Magsaysay Avenue. It offers good service and quality amenities: clean rooms, a swimming pool, sauna, bar and restaurant, and a shuttle that will take visitors to and from the airport. Rooms cost P700.00 to P 3,000.00 per night.

A cheaper alternative is the Lucky Fortune Hotel [054.4725923; 4725924 and 4725925] located at 27, Abella St. in Naga City. Rooms cost P600.00 to P 1,600.00 per night.

There are two resorts located in Barangay Carolina along Paganiban Drive, the road leading to the Park entrance. The first one is Magic Splash Resort [054.8115493; 4725170]. It has two swimming pools, a function hall, restaurant and bar. Rooms (double and triple occupancy) cost respectively P 600.00 and P 650.00 per night. Further uphill, you will find Peñafrancia Resort [054.4730380]. It stands in the middle of a farm and has a rustic ambiance. Suited for seminars and workshops, it has a function hall and cottages hosting up to 10 guests for P2,500 per night.

### Food

Visitors are familiar with Bicolano delicatessen offered at *Aling Conching's* situated along Diversion Road and Kanyaman near Villa Caceres.

Downtown Chinese restaurants serve cheap yet delicious food. A meal in a restaurant costs a minimum of P150.00. The eateries along Peñafrancia Avenue offer budget meals. A complete meal with rice, meat and vegetable dishes costs around P80.00

Try Bicol Express, a local delicacy made of chopped green pepper (*sili*), sautéed in alamang, chopped meat and boiled in coconut milk. Other Bicolano specialties include *pangat* and *kinalas*. **S**