

## A Walk *on* the Wild Side

DESIREE KOH explores some of Singapore's nature parks, where boardwalks and skywalks take you off the beaten track.

**Y**ou don't need to gear up with hiking boots or climbing equipment to get up close and personal with nature in Singapore.

There are structures in some of the city's parks and nature reserves that take you into the heart of mangrove swamps or above forest canopies - all without requiring you to wade through mud or hoist yourself up a tree. Think soaring skywalks for bird's-eye views of sprawling treetops, or meandering boardwalks that allow opportunities for intimate encounters with wildlife in their native environment.

With one just a skip from downtown and the furthest a 15-minute bumboat ride away, they are great for a quick dip into the wild, whether you are a nature lover wanting a respite from urban life or an outdoor warrior looking for a hiking or biking fix in a green environment.

### TREETOP WALK, MACRITCHIE RESERVOIR PARK

What's buzzing in the treetops 25m above ground? Find out when you traipse along MacRitchie Reservoir Park's TreeTop Walk (pictured), a 250m-long aerial walkway between Bukit Peirce and Bukit Kalang, the two highest points in this nature reserve. The first free-standing suspension bridge stretching over a forest canopy in South-east Asia, it offers views of wildlife habitats normally inaccessible to humans, such as flying lemurs and long-tailed macaques "hanging out"; and the acrobatic shenanigans of clouded monitor lizards, plantain squirrels and common sun skinks. Along the way, take in the panorama of Upper Peirce Reservoir, and marvel at surroundings that are, literally, a breath of fresh air in Singapore. [nparks.gov.sg](http://nparks.gov.sg)







### OCBC SKYWAY, GARDENS BY THE BAY

Strolling along this walkway (left) 22m above the ground, you can make out every leaf and petal on some of the bromeliads, orchids, ferns and flowering climbers growing on the “branches” of the Supertrees. These giant tree-shaped vertical gardens, up to 50m tall, are home to more than 160,000 tropical plants from all over the world. The 128m-long skyway that snakes between two of the Supertrees enables visitors to see details on the plants not visible from the ground. On your stratospheric wander along the skyway, take a moment also to look out at the stunning sight of these massive trellises against the vista of Singapore’s Central Business District. And as dusk falls, see the foliage in a different light as the Supertrees come alive in a light and sound display. (Admission fees to the Skywalk apply.)

[gardensbythebay.com.sg](http://gardensbythebay.com.sg)

## TIPS FOR YOUR WALK

### GO WITH A GUIDE

Chek Jawa and Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve offer guided tours. The nuggets of information that the guides provide greatly enrich your visit. Plus, they help you spot animals and plants you might otherwise miss.

### GET CLOSE

Landscapes are great to photograph, but zooming in on creatures in their natural habitat makes for uncommon snaps, especially when you catch them in action. You don’t have to set up shots in nature – just frame and shoot.

### SLOW DOWN

Loud noises and sudden movements keep the animals in hiding – remember, they can hear you better than you can them. Just relax and be patient, and you will be rewarded in time with the wildlife sightings you crave.

### MANGROVE AND COASTAL LOOP BOARDWALKS, CHEK JAWA

A 15-minute bumboat ride takes you to Pulau Ubin, home to Chek Jawa, a stretch of intertidal flats on the island’s eastern coast. This swathe of shoreline (right) that is exposed at low tide and flooded when the tide comes in, has one of the country’s richest ecosystems.

Here, 1.1km of boardwalks lead you into the mangrove hideaways of rare birds such as the oriental pied hornbill and red junglefowl, and critically endangered plants like the delek air tree and seashore nutmeg. So many species dwell in Chek Jawa that each return visit is likely to reveal residents not seen before. The landscape, too, is constantly changing with the tide.

[nparks.gov.sg](http://nparks.gov.sg)







### **MANGROVE BOARDWALK, SUNGEI BULOH WETLAND RESERVE**

This 130ha green belt, a favourite of huge flocks of migratory shorebirds, was recognised as an ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) heritage park in 2003, for its array of bird life as well as animals such as otters, monitor lizards and even crocodiles.

Boardwalks (left) keep visitors safe – and their feet dry – as they venture deep into the mangroves to catch sight of tree climbing crabs scuttling up trunks of trees, mudskippers skimming across swamp waters and archerfish shooting insects with jets of water. Along the trails are shelters where visitors can rest or simply savour the serenity, with only the raucous call of the collared kingfisher breaking the peace.

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