

Your Cultural Heritage Guide to Thomson Nature Park

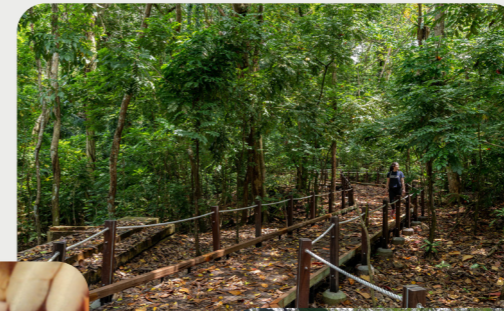
Discover the rustic charm of Thomson Nature Park, the site of a former Hainan Village situated in close proximity to the Central Catchment Nature Reserve. This 50-hectare park features walking trails that cover 3.8 km of meandering roads and pathways that were once used by villagers.

As you walk through the trails, immerse yourself in nature and be captivated by Thomson Nature Park's rich history and cultural heritage. The many kampung remnants found along the trails offer a glimpse into the past and serve as a vivid reminder of kampung life.

As you begin your journey, remember to take nothing but photographs and to leave with nothing but memories.



Photo credit: Photos and stories contributed by the former residents of the Hainan Village



Difficulty level:
Easy to Moderate



Terrain:
Some areas are undulating with steps. Wheelchair accessible only at the entrance node.



Distance:
3.8 km



Walking time:
1- 2 hours



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#NParksBuzz #AnimalBuzzSG

Main Entrance: Upper Thomson Road
Entrance 2: Old Upper Thomson Road (Macaque Trail)
Entrance 3: Old Upper Thomson Road (Langur Trail)

Nature Park Opening Hours: 7 am – 7 pm daily
(entering or staying in the park after 7 pm is not allowed)
Carpark Opening Hours: 7 am – 7 pm daily (smoke-free 🚭)

Thomson Nature Park

1 Rambutan Trail



2 Pavilion



3 Toilet Block



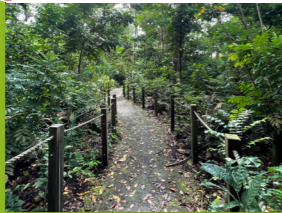
4 Majestic Roots



5 Langur Trail Entrance



6 Macaque Trail Entrance



CONSERVING OUR BIODIVERSITY

To ensure the safety of all visitors and to protect the rich flora and fauna that are found in the nature park, please observe the following Trail Etiquette:

- Avoid carrying plastic bags as monkeys tend to associate plastic bags with food and may try to grab them.
- Do not feed the animals. There is sufficient food in the forest for wildlife and feeding them would disrupt their natural behaviour.
- Stay on designated trails for your own safety. Do not venture off the trails as you will risk disturbing and trampling on our flora and fauna.
- Take home nothing but fond memories. Do not remove any plants, flowers, or fruits as these are necessary for the park's ecosystem to thrive.
- Keep your volume low to hear the natural sounds of the park. Move quietly and carefully as noise may disturb our native animals.
- Keep your pets out of the forest as their scent can affect the movement and behaviour of wildlife in our forests.
- Do not release any pets or animals as they are unlikely to adapt to the environment and might disrupt the ecological balance.

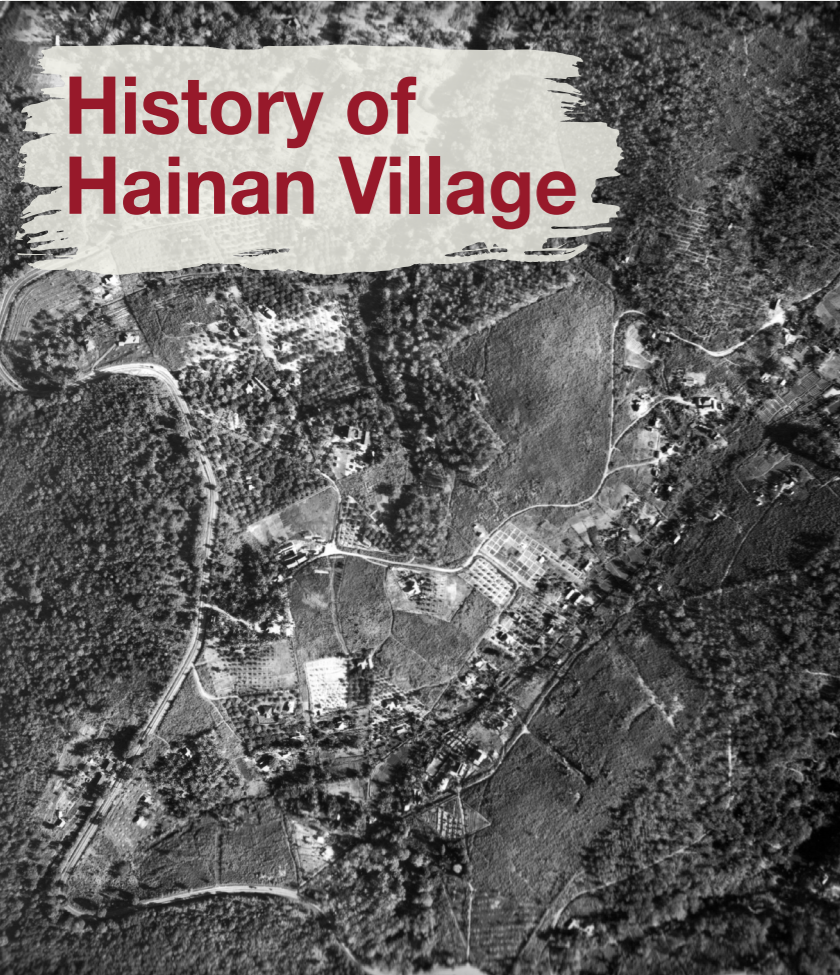
HOW TO GET TO THOMSON NATURE PARK:

- BY BUS**
- 138, 138A, 167, 169, 860, 980
Alight at Upper Thomson Road (After Tagore Drive, Bus Stop ID: 56061)
 - 138, 167, 169, 860, 980
Alight at Upper Thomson Road (Before Tagore Drive, Bus Stop ID: 56069)

- BY TRAIN**
- Lentor MRT Station
Walk 2.3 km via Yio Chu Kang Road and turn right into Upper Thomson Road (enter via park main entrance), or Old Upper Thomson Park Connector (enter via Macaque or Langur Trail)

- BY CAR**
- Thomson Nature Park carpark is situated along Upper Thomson Road, about 200 m away from Bus Stop ID 56061 (After Tagore Drive)

History of Hainan Village



The settlement plan of the Hainan Village in 1951. Copyright 1951, Royal Air Force, United Kingdom.

Photo credit: National Archives & Tony O'Dempsey

The former Hainan Village within Thomson Nature Park was a settlement of mainly Hainanese. Many who settled in the Hainan Village had travelled a long way in search of a new place to call home. While the journey was arduous and unpredictable, their resilience and perseverance have paved the way for their success.

1960s

The village housed a melting pot of cultures with close to a hundred residents from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Malays and Eurasians. The *Kampung Spirit* or *Gotong Royong* in Malay is synonymous with village life, and the residents of this Hainan Village were no different. Often, the villagers would come together to improve the village infrastructure and prepare feasts for community celebrations. Children from different households would have fun playing with one another, forming fond childhood memories together.



1930s

A Hainan Village once stood on where Thomson Nature Park now is: it was a settlement renowned for its luscious rambutans and succulent chickens. The village came into existence in the 1930s, when Hainanese immigrants first settled here.



1980s

The residents of the Hainan Village left in the late 1980s, and signs of the settlement, such as the buildings and agricultural plots, remained.

2010s

After the Hainan's Village closure in 1980, remnant vegetation claimed the abandoned land. Many of the fruit and Ficus trees remaining in the area have been serving as important food sources for forest inhabitants.

Thomson Nature Park opened on 11 October 2019. The road network of the former village now forms part of the Ruins and Figs, the Streams and Ferns, and the Rambutan Trails.



Ruins and Figs Trail



 **1.5km**

Start your journey at Ruins and Figs Trail to begin uncovering the heritage of Thomson Nature Park.



Lighted Alley

Road names in early Singapore drew inspiration from our rich culture and everyday life. The Hainan village was only accessible via two minor roads, Lorong Pelita and Jalan Belang. *Pelita* is the Malay word for oil lamp, which was fitting as electricity only reached the area in the late 1960s.



Gotong Royong

A strong sense of community and solidarity made village living an important piece of Singapore's treasured heritage, as evident in Hainan Village. Fellow villagers were more than just neighbours; they became lifelong friends, ensuring everyone lived harmoniously and comfortably. In the 1960s, villagers banded together to upgrade the existing gravel track to a road, which greatly eased commute. The value of the 'kampung spirit', where residents exhibit the willingness to help one another, continues to be an important aspect of Singapore's culture.



Overcoming the Hilly Terrain

Many houses in the Hainan Village were built on hill slopes due to a lack of flat land. Residents had to capitalise on the terrain by establishing concrete walls. These walls held back earth that might otherwise have shifted downwards, enabling families to safely build their homes on the hilly terrain. While the structure of the village houses has long been demolished, remnants of these retaining concrete walls have stood the test of time.



Seeking Opportunities

The early settlers at Hainan Village had travelled over land and sea in search of a better life away from poverty. Their new beginnings in Singapore were filled with uncertainty, but this only spurred them on to work harder and remain resilient when facing with struggles. This tenacious spirit and hunger for success spilled over to the next generation of residents, who continued to work hard towards providing a comfortable life for their families. The majority of the residents took on farming and rearing of poultry and pigs, and supplemented their income by growing fruits such as rambutan and banana. Some of these fruit trees remain in the Nature Park and serve as food sources for wildlife.



Simple Living

Although piped water and electricity became available in the later years of the village, many residents continued to collect rain water, draw water from wells, and use firewood for cooking as they found these options to be better and more economical.



Stream and Ferns Trail



Striped Road

Belang means 'stripes' in Malay and might have referred to the stripes of tigers that were possibly sighted in Jalan Belang in the past.



Homegrown Brand

The family of Han Choon Fook used to live in House 25, situated along Jalan Belang. This house was distinguished by the brick pillars at the entrance. Han Choon Fook's father was the founder of Han's Bakery. Prior to starting his business, the older Han worked at his uncle's coffee shop and subsequently operated a canteen with his neighbour in a naval base in Sembawang. In 1978, the Hans saved enough to set up a small bakery along Upper Thomson Road and eventually expanded it island-wide to become today's Han's Café.

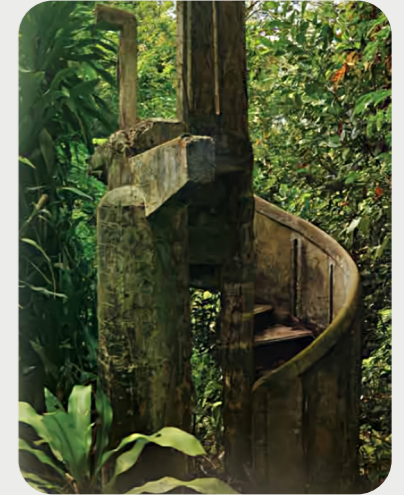


 **1.4km**

Take a stroll on Stream and Ferns Trail and imagine a time when wild tigers once roamed Singapore.

Living in Harmony

The Fox family was one of the Eurasian families that resided in the Hainan Village. Their house had a distinctive, unique spiral staircase that still stands today. The head of the Fox family used to drive a mobile library which brought the wealth of knowledge to residents and children in the village.

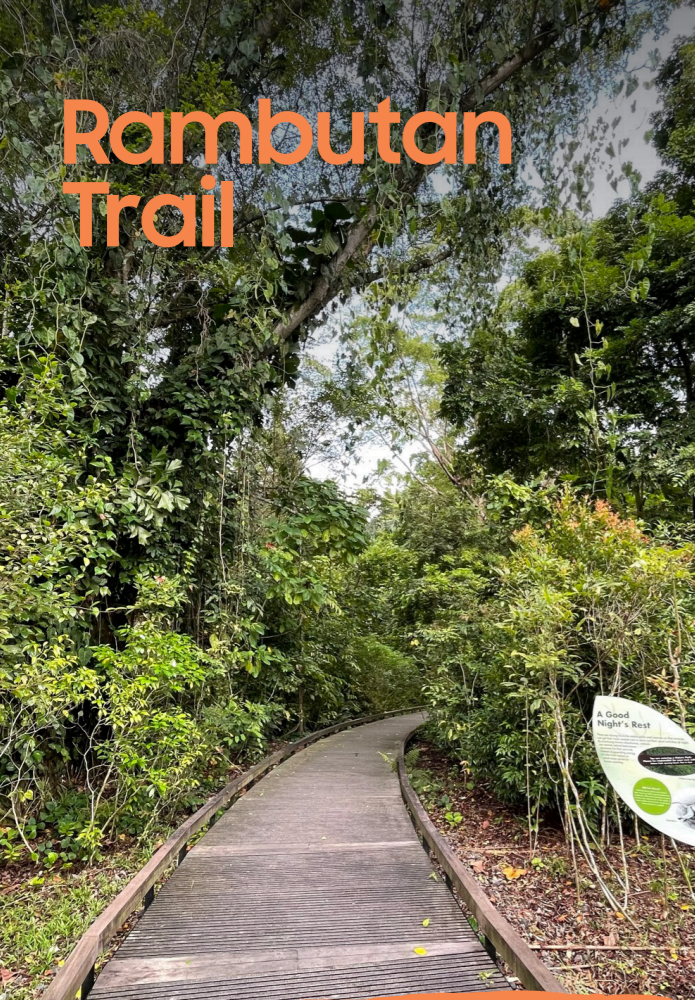


Living Off The Land

Pig rearing was an important source of income for many residents in Hainan Village. Residents would prepare large quantities of pig feed by using readily available water hyacinth which was cooked in large outdoor stoves. The villagers were also resourceful and frugal by repurposing leftover food as pig feed. The remains of the outdoor stove from House 21 (owned by the Wong family) can still be seen in the park.



Rambutan Trail



 **0.4km**

Journey through the Rambutan Trail to explore the remnants of Han's Rambutan Garden, known during its heyday for its rambutans of superior quality and abundance of the fruit. Continue onwards to the end of the trail to uncover the history of Singapore's first Grand Prix.



Who was Han Wai Toon?

Han Wai Toon (1891 – 1970) was born in Wenchang village of Hainan Island, China. Like many others, Han moved to Singapore in hopes of a better life. His dream was realised in 1937 when he purchased one hectare of land at what is presently the northern part of Thomson Nature Park. There, he set up a rambutan garden called Yu Qu Yuan (愚趣园), which doubled as a place for leisure and art appreciation. Han was also recognised in Singapore for many of his skills and knowledge, including archaeology, historical geography, pharmaceuticals and ceramics. In 1962, Han sold his farmhouse and garden and returned to Beijing, China, where he spent his remaining years working as a research fellow at the National Cultural and History Council. The garden was converted into a chicken farm and later returned to the state following the village's closure in 1980s.



Han Wai Toon



Han's Rambutan Garden

Han's rambutan garden became known throughout Singapore for its sweet and succulent rambutans. It also served as a gathering place for family, friends, scholars, and neighbours. The rambutan trees supplemented Han's income. From harvest to harvest, regulars would return to buy the succulent fruits sold at the garden's gate.

The Water Source

Han's rambutan garden was supplied with water from a natural spring. The spring water was clear and required no filtration. To obtain water for drinking and garden watering, they installed water pipes and a hand pumping system. These systems delivered water to a large storage tank and three ceramic water jars located outside the kitchen. The trickling sounds of the natural spring water can still be heard today.



Han's Farmhouse

Han's farmhouse consisted of a master bedroom, studio and gallery museum where he displayed a vast collection of Chinese artwork, ceramics and relics. While all that remains of the farmhouse is a lone staircase that once led to the master bedroom, it stands as a reminder of a once busy and bustling home.

End of Trail

We hope you have enjoyed your walk at Thomson Nature Park. If you wish to explore more of the Central Nature Park Network, do consider exploring Dairy Farm Nature Park, Springleaf Nature Park, or Windsor Nature Park.

www.nparks.gov.sg/eguides



A painting of Han Wai Toon's estate by Lim Mu Hue.

Lim Mu Hue's Painting of Han's Rambutan Garden

Han Wai Toon regularly invited friends and scholars to gather in his garden to savour the rambutans. His guests included Chinese artist Xu Bei Hong, poet Yu Dafu, Lim Mu Hue and Marco Hsu, a renowned art critic. Prior to Han's departure from Singapore in 1962, Hsu suggested that Lim create a commemorative painting of the garden as a parting gift for Han. The final painting was done using rice paper, allowing Lim to create the truest depiction of the rambutan garden using Chinese ink.



Photo credit: Looi family archives

Looi's Motor

Champion motorcycle racer Looi Im Heok turned his passion into a business, by opening his first motorcycle shop in 1957 at a vacant school building that his father, Looi Kim Eng, owned in the village. He then set up a workshop along Upper Thomson Road and Looi's Motor was founded in 1961. The workshop was situated near the start of the racing track of the former Singapore Grand Prix.



Photo credit: Former residents of the Hainan Village

Singapore Grand Prix

The first Singapore Grand Prix was held at the Thomson Road circuit, which covered stretches of Old Upper Thomson Road and Upper Thomson Road. It took place on 16 and 17 September 1961 and continued for the next 13 years. As the event was free, the public grandstands would be filled with spectators while others would crowd on the slopes along the roads to get a good view of the race.

