

Birding Snippets

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Birding Gunung Kerinci & Tapan Road, Sumatra - Part 4 :Practicalities



Getting There Getting to Kerinci is as easy as 1, 2, 3!

- 1) Call Pak Subandi to inform him of your visit and arrange for airport pickup.
- 2) Book a flight for Padang airport.
- 3) Get on the flight at the appointed time.

It is as simple as that! Pak Subandi operates a homestay, is a good bird guide, can take care of your transport and speaks English!

**Getting There –
More Information**

The international airport at Padang is the gateway to Gunung Kerinci. There are direct flights from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur as well as Jakarta.

Kersik Tua is 200km from Padang. The simplest way to get there is to pre-arrange transport with Pak Subandi via telephone. His telephone number is +62 (0)748 357 009. He has a non air-

conditioned 7-seater and charges Rp 700,000 for a one-way transfer from Padang (Sep 2007 price). Considering that he, or his son, drives up and stay at a hotel the night before in order to pick us up early in the morning, it is a reasonable price.

It is also possible to get a vehicle and driver upon arrival. The drivers will assail you anyway! The price will depend on your bargaining skills.

Those on a budget can find your way to the bus terminal and take a Sungai Penuh bus, just remember to tell the driver that you want to get off at Kersik Tua. There is a big sign that reads "Kersik Tuo" (the old name) at the *pasar* (market) at Kersik Tua, both of which are on the left side of the road when you reach Kersik Tua. Pak Subandi's homestay is just 200m or so, farther down the road from the *pasar*, on the left. The stone tiger that marks the beginning of the access track through the tea plantations, on the right, is not very prominent.

*The stone tiger
(middle of pic)
by the road side
as seen from
Pak Subandi's house,
marks the start
of the 5km
rutted road through
the tea plantation.*



Accommodation Most birders stay at Pak Subandi's homestay as he keeps a bird logbook and is well used to birders' routine of early starts. The 2 rooms in front come with attached bathrooms while the rooms behind do not. The rooms are quite small and the bathrooms come with squat toilets and a basin of cold water. Kersik Tua is more than 1000m above sea level and it is cold at night and in the mornings. Luckily, he boils water for his guests to

have a warm bath after a full day of birding.

If his homestay is full, he can recommend other homestays near his place.

*Pak Subandi's house
with his vehicle
parked in front.
His house is right
by the main road.*

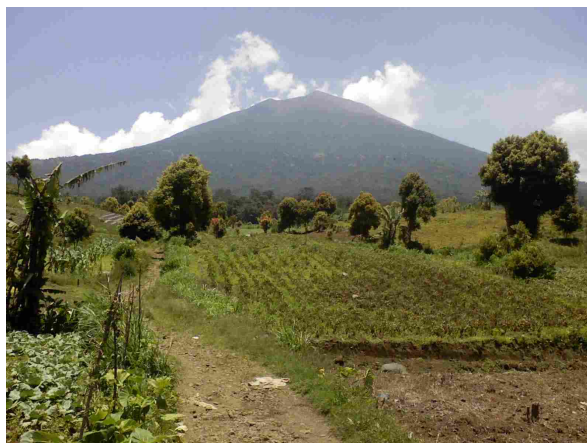


Food Pak Subandi can provide all meals including packed lunch. Food being Indonesian fare is usually rice plus dishes and sometimes noodle soup. It is not too spicy and is generally good.

Language Thanks to all the travelers who had patronized Pak Subandi for more than a decade, he now speaks a smattering of self-taught English, learnt through speaking with his guests!

Getting to the trail The start of the trail is 5km from Pak Subandi's homestay, via a vehicular access track 20m from his house that goes through the tea plantation. It is advisable to do the 5km in his vehicle rather than an *ojek* as the wind chill from a motorcycle ride would make it really cold in the pre-dawn!

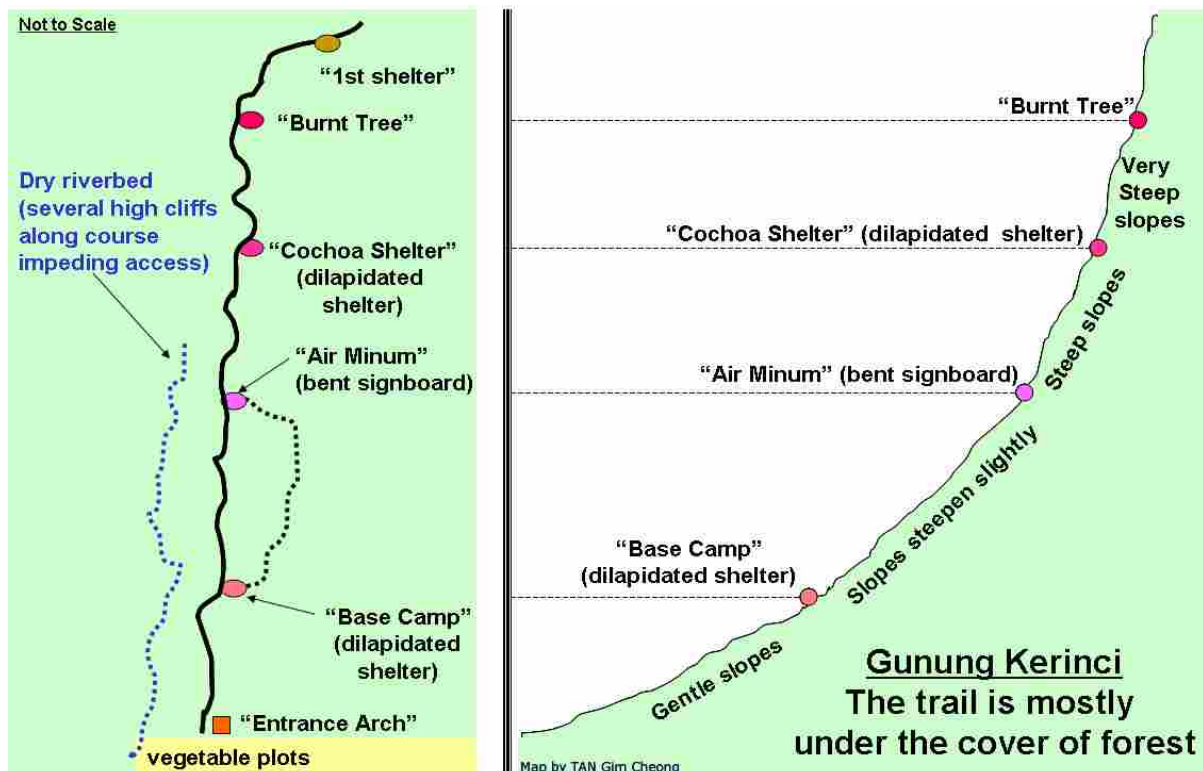
*Vegetable gardens
along the access path to
Gunung Kerinci.*



The entrance to the forest at Gunung Kerinci.



The birding trail Birding is mainly done on the trail that climbers use to ascend Gunung Kerinci. The first part to Base Camp is quite gentle but it gets steeper and steeper beyond that.



Left: Plan view of birding trail on Kerinci. Right: Side profile of birding trail as it ascends Kerinci.

Biting Creatures Fortunately, there are no leeches on Gunung Kerinci. Mosquitoes are also few.

National Park Permits Bring a photocopy of your passport and Pak Subandi can take care of the permits.

Visas Singaporeans and I believe Asean nationals do not require visas for short visits. Nationals of many

other countries can get a “visa-on-arrival” at Padang airport. A 7 day visa costs US\$10 and a 30-day one US\$25.

Lunch stop on the dry riverbed.

Note the thermos flask – hot coffee at cool montane temperatures!



Tapan Road A visit to Tapan Road is essential for a number of species that do not occur or are difficult to find at Gunung Kerinci. This is due to the fact that the Tapan pass is lower in altitude – around 1000m and the road goes down to the lowlands at the next village – Muara Sako. Some of the specialties here include Graceful Pitta, Marbled Wren-babbler, Sumatran Leafbird, endemic bulbuls and hornbills. Birding here is really easy, you just walk down the road, which thankfully isn’t a busy one. To get the pitta and wren-babbler, you’ll have to get into the roadside gullies though.

Schematic map showing location of Padang (location of Airport), Gunung Kerinci and Tapan Road.



Pak Subandi can arrange for a vehicle and driver for a day trip to the Tapan Road for Rp 500,000. It will entail an early start at 4am to get to there by dawn. He'll bring packed lunch and coffee/tea. Just be prepared for a bumpy ride.

Getting Home Our flight out of Padang was in the morning, so on our 2nd last day, we left Kersik Tua after lunch for Padang. We arrived in town after sunset, got a room at a hotel, had dinner and arranged for a taxi with the hotel to send us to the airport the next morning.