The Gunung Stong State Forest Park (GSSFP), with her cascading waterfalls, mountain streams and pools, and the different habitat types, attracts visitors. However, the visitors are more interested in the outdoor recreational activities, and are not aware of what GSSFP has to offer, especially her rich natural resources. This guide is meant to initiate the reader with in-depth information about GSSFP, so that after a visit, the visitor will become more knowledgeable about what nature has to offer here, and make return visits, as GSSFP cannot be savoured within one visit.

This GSSFP guide starts with a general background on the history of Kelantan state, to introduce the reader to the state, followed by a general history of GSSFP, with a timeline on its development into a state park. Access into GSSFP is then described, for readers to choose on the mode of travel, the distances, and the estimated travel costs incurred.

This guide provides a brief description on the biodiversity of wildlife, and plants (especially the rare and endemic species) and their locations, with photos for easy identification. As this guide is for the layman who is interested in nature, a full species checklist is not provided, but certain species are highlighted. General geological background is then provided, followed by description of trails and summits to be attempted by the interested hiker, especially those attempting to venture deeper into GSSFP.

Finally, there is also a list of accommodations offered at GSSFP and Dabong, with a list of prices, and the operators involved in providing guiding services and packages. This is for the visitors who are more interested to visit GSSFP on guided packages. The latter part of the guide book is for other activities and places of interest in the areas surrounding GSSFP.
The Gunung Stong State Forest Park was formerly the Gunung Stong Tengah Forest Reserve, and lies in central Kelantan. Managed by the Kelantan State Forestry Department, it covers an area of 21,950 ha, and is surrounded by the Basor Forest Reserve (40,790ha), the Gunung Stong Utara Forest Reserve (11,044ha), Gunung Stong Selatan Forest Reserve (28,134ha), Balah Forest Reserve (56,010ha), and the Berangkat Forest Reserve (21,409ha). GSSFP and this group of forest reserves account for 157,087ha of forests.

The importance of GSSFP is its position as a corridor that links large blocks of forests in the east coast of the peninsula to the Main Range, and there on, to the Royal Belum State Park and the forests on the southern Thai side, such as the Hala Bala Wildlife Sanctuary and the Bang Lang National Park. GSSFP is popular with visitors, who have been hiking to the mountains since the early 90s, and is on the map of Malaysian and Singaporean outdoor recreation enthusiasts. With an estimated 10,000 visitors for the past few years, it is an improvement over a decline in 1997-2003, due to the economic crisis, the SARS epidemic, and the terrorism scares after September 11. GSSFP has been identified as one of the top five ecotourism destinations by the Ministry of Tourism in Malaysia, and visitor numbers are expected to rise with the increase in promotions. In fact, in terms of visitor numbers, GSSFP is more popular than some other state parks.

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General History of Kelantan

Before Melaka (circa 1400 CE), the history of Kelantan is obscure. In early history, Kelantan was known as Medlang, Kalatama, Sumpuqita, Raktanritika, among others. Possibly it was part of the Kingdom of Langkasuka (circa 100-1400 CE), then subservient to Palembang-based Srivijaya (circa 700-1300 CE), and in various parts of its history, also under the influence of the ancient Indiamised kingdoms of Funan (circa 100-627 CE), Chenla, Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and Pattani. Travelers from Han and Tang China noted a thriving population in the fertile floodplains of the Sg Kelantan, or Ho-lo-Tan, (the name known to them). Kelantan was then, already known as a stopover in the Middle-Eastern Indian-IndoChina-China trade route.

The rise of Melaka in the 15th Century, led to the assimilation of Melakan laws and court culture (which was the inheritor of Srivajayan codes, laws, and culture) due to conquest and the resulting intermarriages between the Melakan and Kelantanese aristocracies.

In the 16th century, the fall of Melaka to the Portuguese, and her decline meant that Kelantan’s fortune, like Pattani, was tied to Siam, which was then expanding southwards. It was probably during this period that, as a token of allegiance, Kelantan had to pay a tri-annual tribute to Siam. It was also during this period that the history of Kelantan became more distinct, with the appearances of the semi-mythical Cik Siti Wan Kembang and Putri Saadong, two female rulers of the state.

The present Kelantan Royal House is derived from Long Yunus, one of the princes who managed to subdue his other rivals in the 19th century. This is a period of civil war, when the state was divided into several feudal lords, and an unstable period, when warring claimants fought their rivals, with interference of fighters from other states. This was also the period of increasing British intervention in the Malay Peninsula, and with their system of indirect rule (through British advisors), introducing British systems of administration and rule of law. For Kelantan, this happened after 1909, when Siam ceded her formal claim over Kelantan to the British, during the Treaty of Bangkok, where the Sphere of Influence between Great Britain and Siam was firmly established.

Except for a brief hiatus during the World War II, when the Japanese returned Kelantan back to Siam, Kelantan was part of the Federated Malay States, and joined the Federation of Malaya in 1948, (which, by the inclusion of Sabah and Sarawak, became Malaysia in 1963).

General History of Gunong Stong State Forest Park (GSSFP)

As the GSSFP area is thickly forested and lies beyond the more populous coastal and Sg Kelantan plain, not much is known about its history. Legend has it that the near mythical Cik Siti Wan Kembang, during the 14th century, settled in Gunung Ayam (there are two Gunung Ayam’s, one in Gua Musang and the other in the Stong area). Far from the major trading centres, this may be a bit far-fetched. However, southern Kelantan and northern Pahang used to be known, in ancient times, for their alluvial gold, and as there are forest trading routes that connect south Thailand to these mines; there could have been a centre to control these routes and exact some form of protection and taxation.

Lacking extensive mineral resources (especially tin) as in the West Coast of the Peninsula, the East Coast states (Kelantan, Pahang, and Trengganu) is relatively backwater, bypassed by development, and the areas surrounding GSSFP are so remote that nothing much happened until the exploration of south Kelantan by Duff Development, which identified the junction of the Sg Galas and Sg Lebir as a potential site for a settlement, known as Kuala Lebir (now known as Kuala Krai) as a half-way point for geological exploration, and in the trade between the northern and southern parts of the state.

The opening of forestland for rubber at the turn of the 19th century and the greater use of mechanised boats, led to faster navigation of the Sg Kelantan, and coupled with the introduction of the railway line (1934), sped up the opening of more forestlands in the south and west including areas surrounding GSSFP. Agricultural conversions slowed down during the advent of the Second World War, and the Emergency between 1948-1960. The end of the Emergency meant that areas that were formerly off-limits were now made available for logging and agriculture (principally rubber) conversion.
Prior to 1985, GSSFP and the surrounding areas were not known for recreation, as the emphasis was on logging, and the clearing up of forestlands for agriculture schemes under KESEDAR or the RPT, state-owned land development schemes (Rancangan Pemulihan Tanah). It was only sometime in the 1980s that a retired Special Forces officer, a Major Yusoff, conducted outdoor recreational training programs in the area. His charges introduced their friends, and by the late 1980s, GSSFP (then known as the Stong Waterfall) was already on the map of local hikers.

Baha, a local guide, started taking several foreign hikers and backpackers in the early 1990s, and by 1992, decided to construct several basic huts with a dining area. Known as Baha Camp, the fame of GSSFP started to spread from this period onwards. Baha died in 2002, but by this time, a team comprising his friends and son, had been formed. Known as BAT (BAHA Adventure Team) Guides, the tradition of guiding has been continued until today.

In 2003, a team of local scientists in the Forestry Department - UKM organised a Scientific Expedition, suggested that the then Stong Tengah Forest Reserve be turned into a protected area. In 2004, the state government agreed to the proposal by the Forestry Department, with the formation of a technical committee overseeing the establishment of the park.

Formation of GSSFP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Timeline of formation of GSSFP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948-1960</td>
<td>Malayan Emergency, not much extensive forest clearings and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-1980</td>
<td>Some logging, and active conversion of forests into land development schemes for agriculture under the RPT and KESEDAR. Some plant collections made by Symington, Foxworthy, and others (collections lodged at the FRIM Herbarium).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1990</td>
<td>Major Yusoff uses GSSFP as a training area for his charges (early and mid-1980s), and by late 1980's, the foothills of GSSFP is logged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Forestry Department-UKM Scientific Expedition gave rise to the idea of a state park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>The idea for a state park accepted by the Kelantan State Exco.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>GSSFP Technical Working Committee formed. Amendments made to the state-adopted National Forestry Act 1984, to accommodate the creation of state parks in Kelantan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Draft Preliminary Management Plan of GSSFP completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>GSSFP gazetted as a state park.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Geologically, GSSFP is part of the Stong Migmatic Complex, composed of igneous rocks that have undergone metamorphosis, forming the Berangkat Tonalite, Kenerong Leucogranite, and the Noring Granite. The Migmatic Stong Complex has similarities with the Benta Complex in Pahang, and is part of the Central Zone Granite that also occurs in Gua Musang, Jeli, and Batang Merban. In Dabong, the Gua Ikan group of caves and limestone hills are part of the Gua Musang Limestone Aggregates. The Stong Migmatic Complex and the Gua Ikan group of caves have been included into a list of geological heritage sites suggested by Dr. Ibrahim Kamar, a prominent Malaysian geologist.
The altitude of this type of forest is generally from 1,100m asl to 1,600m asl, depending on the locality. Boles here are smaller, with a lower canopy layer, few, if any emergents are represented by the families Fagaceae and Lauraceae, with no dipterocarps.

Other Habitats
These are habitats that have been modified by humans, and left undisturbed, have yet to really regenerate to their original forms. Some of these habitats are: coastal padang (bris), Adinandra forests, Gelam swamp forests, and Schima-bamboo forests.
The 2003 scientific expedition and a WWF-Malaysia commissioned survey in 2005 produced a checklist of 130 birds, notable of which are five species of hornbills: rhinoceros hornbill \((\text{Buceros rhinoceros})\), helmeted hornbill \((\text{Rhinoplax vigil})\), bushy-crested hornbill \((\text{Anorrhinus galeritus})\), white-crowned hornbill \((\text{Berenicornis comatus})\), wreathed hornbill \((\text{Aceros undulatus})\) and six montane species: white-throated fantail \((\text{Rhipidura albicollis})\), hill blue flycatcher \((\text{Cyornis banyumas})\), rufous-browed flycatcher \((\text{Ficedula solitaria})\), mountain tailorbird \((\text{Orthotomus cuculatus})\), mountain fulvetta \((\text{Alcippe peracensis})\), black-throated sunbird \((\text{Arachnothera saturata})\) and green-billed malkoha \((\text{Phaenicophaeus tristis})\). Other species in the list include the following: ferruginous partridge \((\text{Caloperdix oculeus})\), great argus \((\text{Argusianus argus})\), blue-crowned hanging parrot \((\text{Loriculus galgulus})\), mountain imperial pigeon \((\text{Ducula badia})\), crested serpent eagle \((\text{Spilornis cheela})\), Blyth’s hawk eagle \((\text{Spizaetus alboniger})\), Oriental honey-buzzard \((\text{Pernis ptilorhyncus})\), dusky broadbill \((\text{Corydon sumatranus})\), golden-bellied gerygone \((\text{Gerygone sulphurea})\), slaty-backed forktail \((\text{Enicurus schistaceus})\), yellow-breasted flowerpecker \((\text{Prionochilus maculatus})\), little spiderhunter \((\text{Arachnothera longirostra})\). However, this is only an initial checklist, further surveys and birding trips may expand the listing of birds.

Mammals

GSSFP is teeming with wildlife and those who have managed to encounter them are the lucky few, and luckier still, are those who encountered large predators, and yet managed to live to tell the tale. Hikers venturing deeper in the forests have experienced the presence of elephants \((\text{Elephas maximus})\) through their droppings, calls, and broken bamboos, branches, and trampled undergrowth. The general presence of wildlife could be inferred through the numerous wildlife-human conflicts in the area, that includes tiger attacks and elephant raids on fruit orchards.

Tigers \((\text{Panthera tigris jacksoni})\) are also common, with numerous prints, and roars heard within GSSFP, and have also been observed just outside GSSFP. The Malayan sun bear \((\text{Helarctos malayanus})\), has been observed along the trails, and also foraging for food at the dumpsites at Baha Camp and the Stong Resort. A juvenile siamang \((\text{Symphalangus syndactylus})\), has made Baha Camp home, and has been observed calling and crashing through the canopies throughout its range, and there are records of the leopard cat \((\text{Prionailurus bengalensis})\) prowling at Baha Camp.

GSSFP is a sanctuary surrounded by forest reserves which are experiencing selective logging, the forests extending into the Tristawas Range and beyond, into the Royal Belum State Park, Ulu Muda, and the Banglang and Hula Bala Wildlife Sanctuary in Thailand. This contiguity with large forested tracts accounts for its high wildlife diversity, and the importance of GSSFP in maintaining forest corridors.

Some of the more interesting mammals recorded through direct observations and camera trapping in the adjacent forests are: the black panther \((\text{Panthera pardus})\), Malayan tapir \((\text{Tapirus indicus})\), serow \((\text{Capricornis sumatraensis})\), barking deer \((\text{Muntiacus muntjak})\), golden cat \((\text{Catopuma temminckii})\), leopard cat \((\text{Prionailurus bengalensis})\), pig-tailed macaque \((\text{Macaca nemestrina})\), banded leaf-monkey \((\text{Presbytis melalophos})\), and the banded linsang \((\text{Prionodon linsang})\).
Out of the 750 or so plant species that are endemic to Peninsular Malaysia, 200 are endemic (found only) to Kelantan, of which seven are hyper-endemics (found only in very specific locations and nowhere else in the world). GSSFP and the surrounding area is fortunate to harbor these species, some of the more prominent are as follows: *Holothummochloa pubescens*, (a small bamboo found only in GSSFP, nowhere else in the world), *Licuala stongensis* (a fan palm found only in GSSFP, and nowhere else in the world), *Goniothalamus vortexdepalus* (endemic to GSSFP and nearby areas). Of course, there are other endemics as well: some species of orchids, gingers, rafflesia, and other herbaceous plants.

The Gua Ikan group of caves, some 5 km south of Dabong, harbors some limestone specialists like the one-leaved plant (*Monophyllaria hirticalyx*), *Begonia foxworthyi*, the balsam, *Impatiens opinata*, and possibly, a new species of balsam. In the river flowing out of Gua Ikan is found the aquatic aroid, *Cryptocoryne affinis*.

Almost all the local communities living in the GSSFP area are Malays, with the one or two exceptions consisting of government servants and banished criminals under the Restricted Residence Act. The locals are mostly involved in agriculture, tapping rubber and growing fruits in their orchards, on plots of land provided by the government, or illegally settled.

There are two Orang Asli communities, one at Kuala La (Temiar) and another Sg. Rual (Jahai), some 50km away, in Gua Musang and Jeli, respectively. A visit to these communities can provide a peek of their lifestyles, but be cautioned: with government aid and funding, they are not as “primitive” as one imagines them to be.

It has always been a tradition in Kelantan, where the poor and landless clears up land, and do some farming. However, since independence, the government has taken a formal role in land distribution, under which, large tracts of forests are cleared and parcelled out (in 6-10 acre plots, to be planted with rubber or oil-palm, with some for fruit orchards) to settlers from other parts of the state.

Known as the RKT (Rancangan Kemajuan Tanah), this role has been taken over by KESEDAR (the Southern Kelantan Development Authority). Lately, the role of KESEDAR has changed, from land development to providing infrastructure, and human development training to the settlers and their offsprings.
Tourism in the form of hiking activities is a major reason for visiting GSSFP. This is consistent with its setting as a protected area, and attracts both domestic and foreign visitors. They attempt its numerous summits or just do a spot of camping at Baha Camp, on top of the waterfall. Visitors stay for 3-7 days, depending on their destinations. Some backpackers come for short visits, like the place, and stay for months. GSSFP is popular with campers and hikers, with some 10,000 visitors per year, contributing to the local economy of some 5,000 inhabitants of Jelawang and Dabong.

The hiker can choose the numerous trails within GSSFP, normally leading to the summits. The trails were created by Baha and his BAT team, and range from half-day trips, to the more challenging 5-7 day hikes, as summarised in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Trail</th>
<th>Duration (Days)</th>
<th>Trail Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gunung Ayam</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>The trail takes one through a logged-over, dipterocarp forest, then across two streams, then through an undisturbed oak-laurel forest, before reaching the summit ridge to the summit. The summit (1,500 m asl), being flat, can easily fit some 50 campers. The summit can be reached within one day from Baha Camp, and the return journey is another day. From the summit are excellent views of the neighboring peaks of Tera (1,556m asl) and Che Tahir (1,415m asl). After the second stream crossing, is a ridge populated with the rare endemic fan-palm, <em>Licuala stongensis</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunung Stong</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>G. Stong (1,400m asl.) is some 4-5 hours from Baha Camp, and the return trip is some three hours. Like G. Ayam, the trail takes the hiker through an abandoned logging trail, before entering undisturbed oak-laurel forests. Like G. Ayam, on the summit ridge are found the rare endemic bamboo, <em>Holtummochoa pubescens</em>. Midway between the base-camp and the summit is a rock-shelter next to a spring, known as Bogo Rock-Shelter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunung Tera</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The trail is an extension of the G. Ayam trail, where the hiker descends G. Ayam, and ascends Tera, a day away. Midway between the two summits is a plateau (G. Saji) where there are plenty signs of elephants. The rare bamboo, <em>H. pubescens</em>, is also found here. The journey to G. Tera and back down again to Baha Camp takes four days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunung Che Tahir</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>This is also an extension of the G. Ayam trail, where the hiker goes down G. Ayam, and then ascends up the granite outcrop that is G. Che Tahir. The summit is not as spectacular as G. Ayam, but the trail is, with pristine rocky streams and cascades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Trail</td>
<td>Duration (Days)</td>
<td>Trail Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sungai Semuliang</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>This trail starts from where the Sg. Kenerong meets the Sg. Semuliang (near the Musteq Mini-Hydropower Dam), along an abandoned logging trail, and then upriver, before turning into the saddle separating G. Ayam from G. Stong. From the saddle, one can make an ascent to G. Ayam, or to G. Stong, and back down again to Baha Camp. Highlights of this trail include a <em>Rafflesia</em> site, and a rock-shelter with petrified wood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven Summits</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>This trail is a combination of the other trails, where the seven summits are attempted (Ayam, Tera, Stong, Che Kob, Che Tahir, Menyelit, Birut). Apart from Ayam, Stong, and Tera, the other peaks are named by Baha, and are not named in official maps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Waterfall</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>This is the shortest hike, and is an easy walk from Baha camp, where one encounters rock-pools, and smaller falls. Along the rock-walls are gesneriads, a population of the endemic <em>L. stongensis</em>, and a population of the slipper orchid, <em>Paphiopedilum barbatum</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gua Ikan Caves</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Not officially part of GSSFP, there are several caves in Dabong that the guides take visitors to, either before entering or after returning from GSSFP.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At about 460m asl, this is the staging point for further hikes within GSSFP, and is a popular site to linger, swim in the rock-pools, and watch the sunrise above the waterfall. Backpackers on 2-3 day packages by guesthouse operators stay here at the basic huts, do short hikes to the last waterfall, and swim, before returning home by train to Kota Bharu. Rental of huts is fixed at RM10 per head per day, camp-sites RM3 per person per night, with free use of the kitchen at the canteen. The trailhead to Baha Camp is through the rear of the Stong Resort, where one climbs a set of concrete steps to the base of the Jelawang Waterfall (some call it the Stong Waterfall), reputedly one of the highest in Malaysia, and follows the trail to the right, ascending all the way to a former logging trail, with further ascents until Baha Camp is reached. Alternatively, one crosses the hanging bridge at the small pool at the Stong Resort, and follows the ascending trail to meet the former logging trail, and ascending further till Baha Camp. An average person will take some 1-2 hours to reach Baha Camp.

One of the most popular, this trail takes one through a logged-over dipterocarp forest, across two streams, then through an undisturbed oak-laurel forest before reaching the summit ridge, and hence, to the summit. From Baha Camp, the summit can be reached in about 5-6 hours, for a fit hiker, and some 8 hours for the less fit. The summit is flat, and can easily fit some 50 campers, with a nearby waterhole for drinking and cooking only. From the summit (1,500m asl), one can have excellent views of the nearby peaks of G. Tera (1,556m asl), and Che Tahir (1,415m asl.). Along the summit ridge can be seen populations of the endemic bamboo, *Holttumochloa pubescens*. One usually camps at the summit of G. Ayam, and returns the next day along the same trail, or detours through G. Stong.
This trail starts from where the Sg. Semuliang and the Sg. Kenerong meet, on the southern approach to GSSP. The hiker goes through an abandoned logging trail, and upriver, following the Sg. Semuliang. The upper limits of the Sg. Semuliang is at Cobra Camp, where one can visit the montane swamp, ascend to G.Tera, or hike up to the saddle and to G. Ayam or G. Stong before hiking back to Baha Camp. The hike takes from 5-7 days, depending on the fitness levels. Highlights include a montane swamp, a petrified wood, and a rafflesia site. Not being a popular trail, it is less disturbed, and is therefore, rich with orchids and other herbaceous plants.

On the map, this ridge links G. Tera (1,536m asl) westwards to G. Noring Timor (1,861m asl) and G. Noring (1,889m asl), on the Kelantan-Perak boundary, and attempts are being made by BAT (Baha Adventure Team) Guides to explore this ridge. This ridge is a migrating corridor for wildlife, especially elephants and tigers, to travel between Kelantan (Stong, Jeli) and Perak (Temengor, Banding Island, Grik), as lowland forests are being developed for agriculture. Expeditions to this ridge is led by BAT Guides and is by invitation only.
Birding

With some 130 species of birds from the checklist, GSSFP and the surrounding is rich in birdlife, due to its natural and near-natural habitats, where there is plenty of interface between primary forests, disturbed forests, and fruit farms. Birders need not climb GSSFP, they just need to take a walk near the big waterfall, the Dabong caves, or along the Sg. Galas, for their birding trips. During the fruit season in June-August, these jaunts will be well rewarded, as locals are generous with their fruits.

Boat and White-Water Trips

Before roads were introduced, the locals used to travel by long-tailed boat, or train, to Kuala Krai, and Gua Musang for their essential needs. Now, the boats are less used, only for shorter destinations, with rubber latex cargoes, and they can be hired for fishing or other trips. There is, as yet, no formal pricing system, but local boatmen can be approached, and prices negotiated. They are quite willing to take visitors around Sg. Galas and her tributaries.

White-water rafting is also organised (by KESEDAR Travel and Friends of Sg. Nenggiri), down the Sg. Nenggiri, where Grade 3 rapids are encountered, and stops can be made at certain caves along the river (some caves are of historical interest, where Neolithic remains of some 5,000-10,000 years have been discovered).

Rock-Climbing and Limestone Hill Climbs

Rock-climbing can be attempted at Taman Etnobotani in Gua Musang, where several pitches have been developed on a limestone cliff face. The limestone hills near the Gua Musang train station can be climbed, and one can appreciate the surrounding landscapes on their summits. There is a nominal charge for rock-climbing facilities operated by KESEDAR Travel, while for climbing the limestone hills, local guides can be arranged through the Friends of Sg. Nenggiri (SSN), at jeprijoe@hotmail.com or 013-6027140. The SSN is a local organisation made of local Malays and Orang Asli of the Temiar tribe.

GUA IKAN

This is a group of caves 3km south of Dabong, and includes Gua Ikan, Gua Keris, Gua Tembakau, Gua Pagar, Gua Puteri, and Gua Setol. Though not part of GSSFP, hikers usually visit these caves as part of their experience to GSSFP, guided by BAT Guides. Guided by a naturalist, the visitor will have added value to the experience, as a limestone cave habitat demands special adaptations from their inhabitants. Limestone specialists here include a trap-door spider, fruit bats, cave racer snakes, and for plants, begonias (Begonia fuxworthyi, B. nurii), some species of balsam, and the one-leaved plant (Monophyllaea hirticata).

Basically, Gua Ikan is named as such because there is a small stream flowing inside, possibly containing fishes, while at Gua Keris, there is a stalactite formation that resembles a keris, the Malay dagger. At Gua Setol, there is a small stream that flows into it, and following upriver, there is a wang, a valley enclosed by steep limestone faces. There is a small trail that connects Gua Setol to Gua Keris, Gua Pagar is a small passage, through which one needs to enter before entering Gua Keris and Gua Puteri. Gua Puteri is named for the goar pools that fill up with water during heavy rains, and is believed to be where fairies bath.

This is a popular trail for visitors who are not too keen on hiking long trails. This is a short trail some 30 minutes from Baha Camp, and could be effectively promoted as an interpretive trail. Following a rocky river, there are points of interest that could be highlighted by a keen naturalist guide, and this includes some dipterocarps of some interest, a pitcher plant (Nepenthes gracillima), some gesneriads attaching to a rock face (Cystandra anisocephala, Cystandromoea grandis, Aeschynanthus sp.), the endemic fan-palm, L. stongensis, and the slipper orchid, Paphiopedilum barbatum. The trail ends at a waterfall, some 50m high, where one can have a swim in the many rock pools. The return trip takes 15 minutes.
Deer and Seladang (*Bos frontalis*) Farm

This is a deer farm operated by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Malaysia (DWNP) in Gua Musang, where there is a captive rehabilitation programme for local deer, porcupine, and wild cattle (gaur). Permission for a visit and accommodation of up to 20 persons can be obtained by writing from their Kota Bharu Head-Office (tel. 09-744-1844) at this address:

**Pengarah Jabatan PERHILITAN Kelantan**
Tingkat 12, Wisma Persekutuan
Jalan Bayam
13664 Kota Bharu
Kelantan.

Pulai Village

Also in Gua Musang, this is a settlement peopled by Hakka Chinese who had been mining for alluvial gold in these parts, until the deposits were exhausted some 100 years ago. Now, the community is subsisting on agriculture. These are mixed-blood Chinese due to the paucity of ethnic Chinese females in this remote part of the country, the miners married with the local Orang Asli, and their descendants are relatively darker.

Gumung Rabong (1,538 m asl)

This is a 1,538 m asl mountain in the G. Rabong Forest Reserve (16,355 ha) adjoining the northern boundary of the 434,300 ha Taman Negara National Park. This is a 3-day return trip, crossing rivers and with a vigorous ascent to the summit. Local guides are necessary, and can be obtained from KESEDAR Travel, BAT, or SSN.

Pergau Dam

This dam provides hydropower to the national electricity grid of Peninsular Malaysia, and was constructed by Kerjaya-Balfour Beatty Construction, where tunnels were drilled, channeling water down a sluice, pushing turbines, and generating electricity. There is a small resort on the dam, operated by KESEDAR. Hikes to G. Norong (1889 m asl) and G. Norong Timur (1861 m asl) through the Sg. Suda and Sg. Renyok Intakes, which are accessible through a metalled road off the Jeli-Dabong Road. Activities are mostly water-based, and includes fishing, boating, and kayaking. For bookings, kindly contact the resort manager, En. Zaaba (019-929-1578).

Entry fees of RM2 are charged by the Stong Resort, while the Forestry Department charges RM5 for entry into GSSFP.

**Local Accommodation**

Accommodation is limited in the Jelawang and Dabong area, and tends to be on the basic side, not suitable for the mass or leisure market. But then, GSSFP is for the adventurous and the nature-oriented, who are less concerned with comfort (In fact, they expect discomfort, and thrive on inconveniences). There is no place for the well-heeled in GSSFP.

**Dabong RestHouse**

This resthouse is operated by the Majlis Daerah Dabong. There are four rooms without air-conditioning, an air-conditioned room, a small hall, and two bungalow units. The rooms without air-conditioning are rented at the rate of RM40 per night, the air-conditioned room is priced at RM50, while the bungalow is at RM70 a night. The small hall is rented at RM60 per day. The caretaker is Abedin, who can be contacted at 019-960-6789.

**Stong Resort**

This resort is currently operated by KPK, the state-owned agency awarded long-term logging concessions. Dormitory rates are RM20 per person per night, while the cabins are at RM150 per night. They can be contacted at 09-936-0027.

**List of Tour Operators to GSSFP**

**BAT Guides**

Responsible for guiding in GSSFP since the early 1990s, this outfit charges daily rates at RM90 a day, to all the hiking destinations in GSSFP. They can be contacted at 019-959-1020, or batgssp@yahoo.com. They also operate campsites at RM3 per person per night, and basic huts above the waterfall at RM10 per head per night. BAT also organises packages to the hiking destinations.

**KESEDAR Travel**

A wholly-owned subsidiary of KESEDAR, a Federal land development agency, KESEDAR Travel takes visitors on 2-3 day packages to GSSFP. Their contact number is 09-9121-788, or email to ksgm@kesedar.gov.my.

**KB Backpackers Holidays Sdn. Bhd.**

Regular packaged trips are made by this agency to GSSFP. They can be contacted at 09-7737-077, or www.kb-backpackers.com.my.
How to get there

Previously access was only by train (completed in 1934) and riverboat, but by the early and mid-1980s, the completion of the East West Highway and the Kuala Lumpur-Gua Musang-Kota Bharu Highway greatly improved accessibility, making GSSFP less isolated. GSSFP can also be approached from Kuala Krai, where through the Kuala Krai-Gua Musang Highway, one makes a right turn after Laloh, and from there, proceed through Sg. Sam. The recently completed Dabong bridge has also made it possible for motorists to cross the Sg. Galas when previously, a boat ride was needed.

GSSFP is accessible by local and express trains, from Kota Bharu (Wakaf Baru), Gua Musang, Gemas, Singapore, and Kuala Lumpur. The train is a popular mode of transport for hikers from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, and backpackers from Kota Bharu, who take the 10.30am Wakaf Bharu-Dabong shuttle.

The means of access are summarised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Destination Route</th>
<th>Fees (RM unless stated otherwise)</th>
<th>Distance (km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Train</strong></td>
<td>Wakaf Baru to Dabong, by local or express train</td>
<td>4.80 (local) 7.00 (Express)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur to Dabong</td>
<td>28.00 (Economy) 48.00 (2nd Class Sleeper Coach)</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From Singapore to Dabong</td>
<td>28.50 (Economy) 38.50 (2nd Class Sleeper Berth)</td>
<td>600</td>
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<td><strong>Motor-vehicle</strong></td>
<td>East-West Highway (via Grik, then turning to Jeli, and straight to Dabong/Jelawang)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>150</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur-Gua Musang Highway (from Gua Musang, follow the signboard to Jelawang or Dabong (through Sg. Terah and Meranto).</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>332</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kota Bharu-Jeli Road (from Jeli proceed to Jelawang).</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kuala Krai-Gua Musang Federal Road (after Laloh, take the right turning to Sg. Sam, and proceed to Dabong and to Jelawang)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

In Peninsular Malaysia, there are already several IUCN Class II protected areas: the Taman Negara National Park, Endau-Rompin National Park, Perlis State Park, Penang State Park, Royal Belum State Park, and the Selangor State Park. Gunung Stong State Forest Park (GSSFP), is only recently gazetted, the legal instruments are already in place, but much more is needed, in terms of operational systems, adequate staffing, and budgets for its management.

This guide only provides preliminary and general information for the general visitor, providing only glimpses of what is to be found here. Special interest visitors such as birdwatchers and amateur botanists will find this inadequate and will need specialist guide books and specialist nature guides that cater for their interests. Hopefully, this will be provided once the volume of visitors increase and there is a need to cater for special interest groups.
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Further Reading


Acknowledgements

This guidebook is part of project MY02740G (Capacity-building of Local Community), which is an extension of project MY02040G (Preparation of Preliminary Management Plan of Gunung Stong State Forest Park), funded by the generous contribution of the Malaysian public.

This guidebook is also made possible, by the support of the Kelantan State Government, in having the vision of having a state park, the Technical Committee (consisting of the State Economic Development Corporation (UPEN), Kelantan Forestry Department, Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWN), Geological Department, RESEDAR (South Kelantan Development Corporation), Majlis Daerah Dabong, Jabatan Pengairan dan Saliran Kelantan, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS), and World Wide Fund for Nature, Malaysia (WWF-Malaysia), in translating this vision into a reality.

We are also indebted to Donovan Louis in contributing to the layout, Dionysius S. K. Sharma, Surin Suksuwan, and Ferdinand Pereira who provided suggestions on the draft text.
The Gunung Stong State Forest Park (GSSFP), with her cascading waterfalls, mountain streams and pools, and the different habitat types, attracts visitors. However, the visitors are more interested in the outdoor recreational activities, and are not aware of what GSSFP has to offer, especially her rich natural resources. This guide is meant to initiate the reader with in-depth information about GSSFP, so that after a visit, the visitor will become more knowledgeable about what nature has to offer here, and make return visits, as GSSFP cannot be savoured within one visit.

This GSSFP guide starts with a general background on the history of Kelantan state, to introduce the reader to the state, followed by a general history of GSSFP, with a timeline on its development into a state park. Access into GSSFP is then described, for readers to choose on the mode of travel, the distances, and the estimated travel costs incurred.

This guide provides a brief description on the biodiversity of wildlife, and plants (especially the rare and endemic species) and their locations, with photos for easy identification. As this guide is for the layman who is interested in nature, a full species checklist is not provided, but certain species are highlighted. General geological background is then provided, followed by description of trails and summits to be attempted by the interested hiker, especially those attempting to venture deeper into GSSFP.

Finally, there is also a list of accommodations offered at GSSFP and Dabong, with a list of prices, and the operators involved in providing guiding services and packages. This is for the visitors who are more interested to visit GSSFP on guided packages. The latter part of the guide book is for other activities and places of interest in the areas surrounding GSSFP.