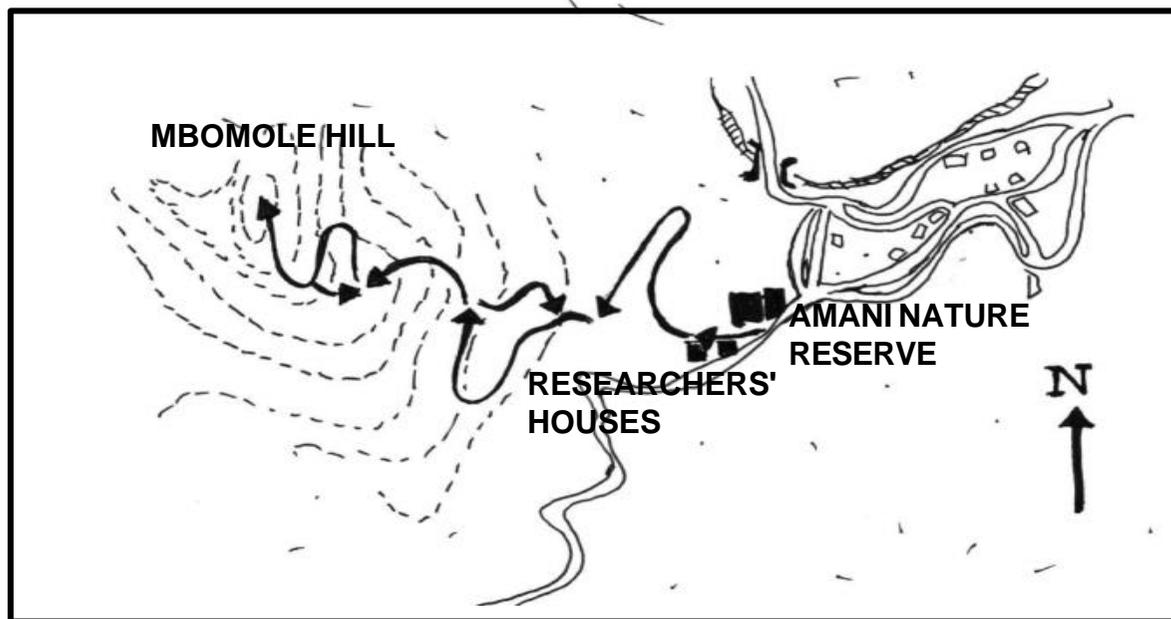


MBOMOLE HILL TRAIL MAP



Amani Nature Reserve:

Mbomole Hill Trail

...IN A NUTSHELL

Mbomole Hill Trail is a 4 km walk round-trip. It consists of a 150 meter climb up Mbomole Hill where a breathtaking panorama of the East Usambara Mountains and the surrounding countryside can be seen.

Total time required is about 1 - 3 hours.

The trail is a good introduction to the ecology and fauna of East Usambaras. The interaction between indigenous species and exotic species can be seen in its lush forests, especially around the Amani Botanical Gardens. Many birds and monkeys can be seen in the forests and from the hill-top, perhaps even an occasional duiker antelope or a genet.

Guided night walks can be arranged. They are the best way to see the numerous frogs and chameleons often impossible to spot during the day.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The East Usambara Area Conservation Management Programme (EUCAMP) aims at protecting biodiversity and water sources while sustaining villager's benefits from the forest. The project is implemented by the Forestry and Beekeeping Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism with financial support from the Government of Finland and European Union.

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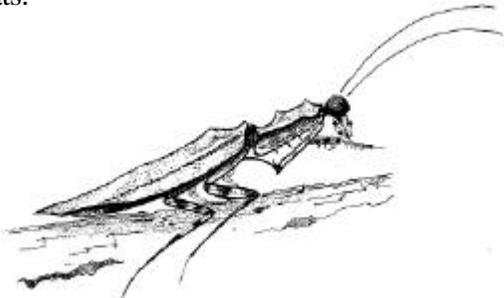
Internet: www.usambara.com

Design by Matti Pohjonen - First edition, April 6, 2002



TRAIL GUIDE

The trail starts behind the Amani Nature Reserve guesthouse and offices. Pass the two researchers' houses. The trail soon enters a dense forest. The continuous, penetrating high-pitched buzz of cicadas will be obvious on warm days. On the path you will see the coconut-like fruits of *Allanblackia stuhlmannii* (Msambu), used by villagers for cooking oil but also eaten by bushpigs and giant rats.



The cicadas make their loud-pitched noise by rubbing their legs together.

After about 300 meters on the track, it bends sharply to the left: Immediately after the bend, take the left fork leaving the main track (which leads to some farms after about 500 meters). On the left fork, after about 250 meters from the junction, you pass a small path going steeply up on the right; you can come back this way on the return route (see map).

The trail begins now to pass between the Mbomole plantations of the Amani Botanical Garden, which were mostly planted in 1904 and 1905. The track soon takes a sharp turn right with a more open area ahead. On the left, just by the abandoned lorry (a remnant of the logging done here in the 1970s) are some small, slender leaves of quinine-producing Red cinchona *Quinquina succirubra*. This tree was a major source of quinine used for malaria control for the German army in during the First World War.

Apath soon joins from the right that can used as a short-cut on the way down. Carry straight on. The path soon enters a natural forest. The Botanical Garden was planted in blocks cut from the native forest - which in places was left standing in between the plantations - as is the case here. You may notice that this area has many epiphytic ferns and impressive strangler figs. Also further on the right, there is a clump of native bamboo *Oreobambos buchwaldii* whose flowers are much visited by loud honey bees. A little after, there is little trail on the left going steeply up: it can also be used as a short-cut.



Epiphytes are characteristic of rain forests. They grow on trees, have no roots and get their water from the moisture in the air.

Soon after, the main trail bends back sharply almost 180 degrees. There are many tree ferns sidelining the trail. After a fallen tree, a smaller junction soon turns right from the main trail. It takes you to the summit. From the steep path zig-zagging towards the summit one can soon already catch a glimpse of the distant Monga forest to the left. After the path cuts through some natural reforest generation, one approaches first of several points providing panoramic views over the surrounding countryside. Climb the rocks past a "Whistling pine" *Casuarina junghuhniana* to reach the hilltop. The sunny top is much favored by butterflies and various birds species.

On the top of the cliff are spectacular views. To the north one can see Mt. Nilo - the highest point in the East Usambaras at 1509 m - over the distant Mgambo tea estates and villages. To the west, over the Monga tea estates and forest, on clear days you can see the high ridges of the West Usambaras. Between the trees to the east, you can see back over the buildings of the Amani village to Mt. Mlinga (1069m).

Raptors such as the Long-crested eagle can often be seen from the hilltop, as well as Silvery-cheeked hornbills (Hondo hondo) with their loud braying call. You can also see a top-down view of the Monga forest canopy below in the valley. Blue monkeys, as well as Black and white colobus monkeys are frequently frightened by hornbill calls and even moving shadows of smaller birds, which cause them to drop to the midstorey and undergrowth like rain.



Easily-recognizable Silvery-cheeked hornbills can be often spotted flying above the East Usambara forests.

On the way down, retrace your steps back across the hilltop and down towards the bigger trail. Once you reach the first junction on the bigger trail - instead of going right (the way you came up), fork left instead. After a while, a steep trail winds down towards the left. It leads to the main trail that you came up on. Retrace your steps the remaining way back home. If the short-cuts indicated are too steep, you may also retrace you way the same way you went up to the summit.