

Nature Trail Badge Challenge

"Nature Trail Badge Challenge" recommends six hiking trail routes for participants to visit and complete designated tasks. These routes are all at locations where The Green Earth's "Repair Your Own Trails" volunteer team has carried out trail maintenance. We hope that through this activity, more nature lovers in Hong Kong can learn more about the stories behind hiking trails. Hence, spread the achievements of our efforts, and encourage everyone to take action to give back to nature and cherish these trails.



Sunset Peak is the third-tallest mountain in Hong Kong. It is 889 metres tall. If you want to hike to the top, be prepared for a difficult route with lots of climbing and descending. You can start your hike from Nam Shan along Lantau Trail Section 2, Pak Keng Au (the most popular starting point), or Wong Lung Hang Country Trail (a more difficult route).

Sunset Peak is in the middle of Lantau Island. Because of this, if you stand on the top of the mountain, you can see both the north and the south of the island. To the north, you can see Hong Kong International Airport. To the south, you can see the South China Sea and the islands that are in the sea.

Sunset Hill's most famous buildings are the stone cabins in the Lantau Mountain Camp. These buildings are almost 100 years old. The large stone steps on the hiking trails are also very distinctive. They were built by trail masters from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department almost 50 years ago.

Every year in autumn and winter, the silvergrass on Sunset Peak attracts lots of visitors. In spring and summer, if the weather is good, Sunset Peak is also a great place to see orographic clouds.

Download the offline version of the "Sunset Peak" guide



Route:
Mai Wo → Luk Tei Tong → Nam Shan Old Village Path → Lantau Trail Section 2 → Sheung Tung Au → Lantau Mountain Camp on Sunset Peak → Pak Keng Au

Distance: 7.6 km
Duration: 6 hours
Difficulty: ★★★★★
Supply point: No supply point on the way

Route Map (PDF file available)

Introduction Point I: Luk Tei Tong Watchtower

Location

Luk Tei Tong Tsuen is thought to be the oldest village in Mai Wo that is still there today. It was built during the Ming Dynasty and has been around for over 400 years. The soil is fertile and there is plenty of water, including a river next to Mai Wo Chung Hau, so it is a great place to grow rice. Old photos show a big rice field in front of the Watchtower and Pang Shui Woods behind it, which is a typical rural layout from that time.

Built next to the Tsang and Wan Ancestral Hall, Luk Tei Tong Watchtower is a three-storey tower made of granite blocks. On each of the four sides of the tower, there are small windows for seeing outside. According to information from the Antiquities Advisory Board, the Tsang clan built Luk Tei Tong Watchtower in 1943 to protect villagers from imperial Japanese soldiers and pirates. In the middle of the 20th century, the tower was changed into a place where people could live, but now nobody lives there. In 2010, the Watchtower was listed as a Grade III historic building.



Luk Tei Tong Watchtower
(Photo credit: @Hikiker, taken in 2018)

Introduction Point II: Old Nam Shan Path

There is a hiking trail behind Luk Tei Tong Tsuen called the "Old Nam Shan Path". This was once a major route that connected Mai Wo and other places on Lantau Island. It is also known as the "Ma Tsu Ancient Trail".

Before the Lantau Link was officially opened, there was no road connecting Lantau Island and other parts of Hong Kong. People living on Lantau Island could only travel to and from Hong Kong Island or other places on Lantau Island by ferry via Mai Wo. The Old Nam Shan Path was the only way to get from Mai Wo to Tung Chung and other villages. From Luk Tei Tong Tsuen, you can go up Nam Shan Old Village Path, then follow the stone steps which lead to Nam Shan Tree Walk and Lantau Trail Section 2. According to "The Joy of Hiking on Hong Kong Ancient Trails" by Mr. Koek Chiu-ai, who studies old trails, villagers climbed up Sheung Tung Au along this route, then passed through the hiking trails next to Yi Tung Shek, Ngau Kau Pak, Sham Shek Tai, and finally arrived at Tung Chung by walking through the hillsides of Por Kai Shan.

Old Nam Shan Path is currently managed by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. It was built using the same stone-paving method that is often used today. The path goes up gradually, so villagers can easily carry heavy goods to and from the ancient trail.



The hiking trail entrance behind Luk Tei Tong Tsuen



A stone paved passage on Old Nam Shan Path



Old Nam Shan Path connects to the starting point of Lantau Trail Section 2

Introduction Point III: Lantau Mountain Camp on Sunset Peak

Location

The old stone cabins on Lantau Mountain Camp are a well-known landmark of Sunset Peak. Most people who walk past the stone cabins would wonder who built them on the hills.

The stone cabins on Sunset Peak were built by foreign missionaries who came to Hong Kong in the 1920s and 1930s for summer retreat. These cabins are also known as Lantau Mountain Camp, and they have almost 100 years of history. After the Second World War, some of the stone cabins were made bigger. They even had swimming pools and canteens, so the missionaries and their families could enjoy some time together every year.

Today, Lantau Mountain Camp has 22 stone cabins, 19 of which people live in. All of the cabins are privately owned. As Sunset Peak becomes a popular hiking and camping spot, this causes problems for the cabin owners. Tourists leave rubbish and human waste behind, and even climb on the roofs of the stone cabins, which are hundreds of years old. This causes damage to the structures. So the cabin owners have formed the Lantau Mountain Camp Residents Association to protect their properties and preserve the area's rich heritage.

Researchers from the School of Architecture of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) recently told the media that the stone cabins of Lantau Mountain Camp are the only remaining building complex of its kind in Southeast Asia that are still in use today. They are the only ones of their kind in terms of size and style. In recent years, with the support from the Lantau Conservation Fund, the CUHK School of Architecture started a project called "Regenerating the Landscape of Lantau Mountain Camp: Co-operative Architectural Restoration and Natural Conservation through Participatory Initiatives". It aims to restore stone cabins and educate the public about conservation.



The stone cabin complex on Sunset Peak distributing evenly on the two sides of the hiking trails between Sunset Peak and Yi Tung Shan

Introduction Point IV: Hill Fire on Sunset Peak

Another popular view of Sunset Peak is the silvergrass that grows all over the hill during autumn and winter. However, these beautiful plants are very at risk of wildfires.

Hill fires broke out on Sunset Peak at two consecutive weekends in the winter of 2021. The fires were very close to the hiking trail, threatening safety of hikers.

Hong Kong has a humid climate, so it is unlikely that natural hill fires will happen. Hill fires are mostly caused by people, for example when kindling is left behind when grass sweeping. With extreme weather becoming more common in recent years, even an unextinguished cigarette butt could be enough to start a hill fire in dry weather.

So, please be very careful when you are near a fire in the countryside and don't smoke. This way everyone can enjoy the fresh air!



Burnt shrubs next to the hiking trail on Sunset Peak after hill fires in 2021.

Introduction Point V: The Mountain Artisans of Hong Kong

Are you out of breath when you hike on the Lantau Trail? Have you ever thought about who built it? Would it be more difficult to build?

Last year, during a training programme for volunteers working on a trail on Lantau Island, the Green Earth met two trail masters from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. Masters Chan Mak-sing and Chan Tak-sing have been working in the department for over 40 and 30 years respectively.

Their job is to look after country parks, which includes building hiking trails. When so asked about the best hiking trail they have ever built, they spoke about the stone steps on the Lantau Trail. They said that the hill there was so steep and dangerous that they had to use their own hands to finish the job. One day, Master Chan Mak-sing's daughter asked him who had built the stone steps on Sunset Peak after climbing it. He replied, "It's me."

Today, these stone-made trails are still used by hikers who came through, and they help them to enjoy the natural beauty of Sunset Peak. But more and more tourists are using the trails, so the people in charge have to repair them from time to time to avoid things found in the mountains. This makes it safe for visitors to hike.



The hiking trail on Sunset Peak in 2021



In 2024, some gentle stone steps were added to the same section of hiking trail, making it safer for hikers.

Ferry: **Mai Wo ↔ Central (Pier No. 6)**

Bus: **3M**
Mai Wo Market ↔ Tung Chung Station Bus Terminus

Bus: **3M / 11**
Tung Chung Station Bus Terminus ↔ Pak Keng Au

Ma On Shan Country Trail

Yuen Tsuen Ancient Trail

MacLachlan Trail Section 4

Mau Ping Ancient Trail

Tai Tong Thousand-Island Lake

Sunset Peak

