

Kicking off the trekking trend

Kaliandra is not the first part of the country to highlight nature tourism based on trekking. In West Java, an NGO called the Forum for Information on Nature Tourism has published detailed maps and high-quality booklets promoting trekking around Mount Gede and Mount Pangrango.

This is a large project, covering 140 kilometers of walks that take up to two weeks to complete (www.puncaktrek.com).

The mountains lie inside a block marked by Bogor, Cianjur and Sukabumi at its corners. Unesco calls this Cibodas Biosphere Reserve "an example of an ecosystem in the humid tropics undergoing strong human pressure".

City-based Indonesians and expats fed up with negotiating Jakarta's concrete canyons started circumambulating the mountains late last century.

They formed a walking club loosely based around the University of Indonesia's Geography Department and eventually found the time and funds to publish.

Bogor-based Alex Kornis, who led the project, has pointed out that, unlike in the United States and many European countries, a hiker is "free to walk almost anywhere he or she fancies, along paths that wind between farmers' tiny garden plots".

It's the same situation in East Java, where the folk who live in the hills seem at ease with the pink-skinned men and women in khaki shorts wandering past their smallholdings.

The "Trespassers will be prosecuted" signs that disfigure much of outback Australia are largely absent in Indonesia where, ironically, it's the entrances to the national parks that are policed. — *Duncan Graham*