



Malapascua

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LEIGH CARCEL, CHARLES BUENCONSEJO, GEISER MACLANG, VICTOR MICHAEL MARIANO

# Cebu's Surprises

Cebu is the country's second most dynamic city and can boast of the country's fastest-growing economy. For most people, it is just a tourist town, but the city and province's other industries, like furniture, fashion accessories, and technology, are also booming. If you want to experience Cebu to the fullest, here's a mix-and-match itinerary—a balance of the old, new, and undiscovered for the visitor who has no time to be clueless.



Highway to Boljoon

one

Chicharon

**1. DRIVE AND DIVE.** The best way to get to know a place is to go for a drive. Cebu is known to have one of the most interesting drives in the country. It offers fantastic views, whether you are heading north or south. Combine your road trip with some diving, as Cebu has some of the best dive spots in the world.

Going north, pass by towns like Danao, Carmen, and Bogu to arrive at Maya port. Park your car and take a ferry to Malapascua island, truly a dive site worth visiting—nothing like spotting a thresher shark at five in the morning. For a place to stay, choose either a luxe resort, like Alegre (between Carmen and Bogu), or one of the more basic yet lovely accommodations on the island like Exotic.

The southern drive is one of the most beautiful I've experienced. Along the way, you'll pass 14 or so historic churches. Some towns like Boljoon have magnificent views of the coastline. Stop by Carcar, known for its old houses, *lechon* (spit-roasted pig) and *chicharon* (pork rinds). On a clear day in Santander, you will see an amazing view of Negros island, particularly Dumaguete City. Continue the drive to Moalboal, another diving resort town.

**2. GO CRUISING.** If you are pressed for time, there are many ways to enjoy island life even for the day. Take a cruise from Mactan and visit the many islands surrounding it. Go luxe and charter a yacht from the Cebu Yacht Club, or hire a more comfortable motor-powered "pump" boat from Fun & Sun. Choose between three boats: Makulit, Malandi, or Maldita. For lunch, stop by a seafood restaurant in Olango island called Stilts, where your order is caught fresh.

The Queen City of the South, as Cebu is called with all the reverence and respect one accords a monarch, lives up to its name as it reveals hidden treasures for the unwary traveler. Local girl Leigh Carcel makes a list of what to do in her hometown



Abaca

three

### 3. EAT IN STYLE...

Abaca Restaurant is no longer a secret. It is frequented by locals and visitors alike, so seats are hard to come by. The dining area is modern but tasteful,

and the delicious California cuisine is sure to make you come back for more. The view of the ocean while dining is quite stunning. The nine-room boutique hotel attached to the restaurant just opened.

### 4...OR DISCOVER LOCAL HAUNTS.

There are heaps of restaurants that are not as glamorous, but the food is excellent and the décor eccentric, if not intimate and casual. The chimichanga in Mexican-inspired Moon Café has tender, mildly spicy beef wrapped in crispy flour tortilla topped with sour cream, salsa, and just the right amount of grease. The restaurant is in an old house where local artists sometimes gather for poetry readings. Spanish eatery Aranos has been around for a long time, but not many tourists know of the place—their bacalao is excellent. Ramen Kamekichi is known for its mouth-watering gyoza.



Chi Spa

four

### 5. UNWIND BY THE SEA.

Does a nice relaxing massage and cocktail sound just right on a Sunday afternoon? Start slow and pamper yourself at Chi, Shangri-La Mactan's world-

class spa. After spoiling yourself, stroll down the shore to Cowrie Cove. Every Sunday, a very interesting crowd gathers informally for happy hour.



Waterfront Hotel facade

six

**6. GO BAR-HOPPING.** If you're the type who likes to view cityscapes spread out before you, then you have to visit Tops, Cebu's hilltop deck, at least once—the view of the city is unparalleled. You can even hire it as a venue for a function or private party. Flare is the hippest party organizer in town—they put together the parties everyone wants to attend.

For a more happening night, proceed to Treff, Waterfront Hotel's chic and sexy bar with an al fresco area. Otherwise, try Giuseppe's Italian restaurant—delicious pasta and out-of-this-world lamb shank. Head toward Z bar for a very classy end to an early evening. If you're the type who likes to go clubbing with pretty young things till the wee hours, there's only one place to go—Vudu.

### 7. MAKE LIKE MARTIN SCORSESE.

Cebu is home to the International Academy of Film and Television, a world-class institution that offers courses in directing, acting, and producing. Attend one of their short courses and seminars, and if you're lucky, also witness a big-budget Hollywood movie being filmed in one of their two big studios in Mactan.

### 8. TAKE IN A LITTLE CULTURE AND HISTORY.

Regardless of how clichéd it sounds, for a little history, spend one morning visiting local sights like the Santo Niño church, Magellan's Cross, Fort San Pedro, and the Taoist Temple for a more rounded view of Cebu's past.

St. Catherine of Alexandria, Carcar



eight

**9. SHOP—OF COURSE!** Furniture and accessories are big businesses in Cebu. Many visitors love to visit the showrooms of some of our more famous designers to check out their latest collections. Most notable for accessories are Avatar, Indian Summer, and Victoria Marin. For furniture masterpieces, worthy enough of Brad Pitt himself, visit Kenneth Cobonpue's showroom. His furniture was featured in *Ocean's Thirteen*. Most of these places, though, are only accessible if you know an insider, so ask around. You can also visit Ethnic Ventures, a shop/restaurant where you can buy export-quality accessories and eat delicious comfort food at the same time—try their *humba* (a sweet, saucy pork dish).

### 10. TRY—AND BRING HOME—CEBU DELICACIES.

Cebu is known for *lechon*, mangoes, *chicharon* and *danggit* (salted fish). Ask a local for the best places to buy them. My personal favorites are CNT and Rico's for *lechon*, Fresco and R&M for dried mangoes, and Carbon market for *danggit*. Other notables are the warm brownie cups of La Marea, Lyn Moro's Belgian chocolate cookies, which you can get from Don Merto's, and go to Café George for the best pork chops in town. The latest buzz in Cebu: Pino, a classy and slick gourmet Filipino resto with interiors by the best in Cebu, which recently opened. ■

## The Cebu Addressbook

Want to check out these places? Clip and save this for your next trip down south

**Abacá Boutique Resort + Restaurant** Punta Engaño Road, Mactan Island, Lapu-Lapu City, tel (32) 495-8456, abacaresort.com

**Alegre Beach Resort** Calumbuyan, Sogod, tel (32) 254-9800, alegrebeachresort.com

**Aranos 31** Fairlane Village, Guadalupe, Cebu City, tel (32) 256-1934

**Avatar Style Center** Mactan Circumferential Road, Marigondon, Lapu-Lapu City, tel (32) 341-1000, avatar-style.com. By appointment

**Café George** Tel (32) 234-0887

**Carbon market** Briones and Calderon Streets, Cebu City  
**Cebu Yacht Club** Gate 2, MEPZ, Lapu-Lapu City, tel (32) 340-9009

**CNT Lechon** Cebu Business Hotel, Junguera St. corner Colon St. Don Merto Banilad Town Center, Gov. M. Cuenco Ave., Banilad  
**Flare** Contact Kate Anzani, tel (+63917) 320-0477

**Fun & Sun Travel & Tours** Unit 5 Regency Crest Condo, Paseo Saturnino Rd., Banilad, Cebu City, tel (32) 343-3357, funsundivetravel.com

**Ethnic Ventures** 32 Pres. M. Roxas St., Kasambagan, Cebu City, tel (32) 233-8339, ethnicventures.com

**Exotic Island Dive & Beach Resort** Tel (32) 437-0983, malapascua.net

**Giuseppe's** Maria Luisa Access Rd., Banilad, Cebu City, tel (32) 343-9901

**Indian Summer Gifts and Accessories** Punta Engaño Rd., Lapu-Lapu City, tel (32) 495-1988, indiansummer.com.ph

**International Academy of Film and Television** One Hollywood Blvd., Bigfoot IT and Media Park, Lapu-Lapu City, tel (32) 493-8889, filmschool.ph

**Kenneth Cobonpue** 3A Gen. Maxilom Ave., Cebu City, tel (32) 233-4045, kennethcobonpue.com. By appointment

**La Marea** Crossroads Mall, Banilad, Cebu City

**Malapascua Island** Go to the North Bus Terminal located in the reclamation area, and take the Maya bus. The trip takes 3.5 to 4 hours. Fare is P75. They have hourly schedules that start as early as 4am. There are also rent-

a-cars and vans from the Cebu-Mactan International Airport. Rates are about P1,800 for a car and P2,500 for a van. From Maya, there are outrigger boats that take you directly to Malapascua. The trip will take at least 40 minutes. Fare is P50 per person. The first trip is at 9am, last one at 7pm.

**Moon Café** 42 E. Osmeña corner J. Diaz St., Guadalupe, Cebu City, tel (32) 253-3635

**Pino** Wilson Street, Lahug, Cebu City

**Ramen Kamekichi** F. Cabahug St., Mabolo, Kasambagan, Cebu City, tel (32) 422-4288

**R&M Preserves** 441-B V. Rama Ave., Guadalupe, Cebu City, tel (32) 254-5777

**Rico's Lechon** Tel (32) 344-0119 or (+63917) 407-2033

**Shangri-La's Mactan Resort & Spa** Punta Engaño Rd., Lapu-Lapu City, tel (32) 231-0288, shangri-la.com

**Stilts Restaurant** Barangay Caw-Oy, Olango Island

**Victoria Marin** Villa Terrace, Green Hills Rd., Casuntingan, Mandaue City, tel (32) 346-1077, victoriamarin.com

**Vudu** Crossroads Mall, Banilad, Cebu City, tel (32) 234-0836, vudu.com.ph

**Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casino** 1 Salinas Drive, Lahug, Cebu City, tel (32) 232-6888, waterfronthotels.com.ph

**Z Bar** 2/f Archbishop Reyes corner Bauhinia Dr., Banilad, Cebu City, tel (32) 234-1681

Balay na Tisa, Carcar

