

BORED WITH FIVE-STAR HOTELS AND LUXURY RESORTS? HERE ARE 10 UNIQUE ACCOMMODATIONS AROUND THE COUNTRY THAT'S SURE TO IMPRESS THE WORLD-WEARY

# Philippine Pit St Ops



BALAY  
INDANG



THE ANANYANA



MIRAMAR HOTEL



SITIO REMEDIOS

PHOTOS BY ELBERT CUENCA, MIKE ABASOLO (REDSIMBA.WORDPRESS.COM), RENE ENRIQUEZ (RENRIQUEZ.COM), JAN ONG

**1. GARDEN SETTING**  
**SONYA'S GARDEN** started out as, yes, a private garden, where Sonya Garcia grew organic vegetables, fresh herbs, and exotic flowers, which she would pick and serve to friends who stayed over. Upon their prodding, she slowly expanded and opened to the public as a bed and breakfast. Aside from the original restaurant, Sonya's now has 12 cottages named after herbs, a spa called SPA (Secret Pleasures At Sonya's), an old-fashioned bakery, and a country store filled with handmade treasures. The lush, idyllic setting is a favorite of couples, ladies who lunch, tourists looking for something outside the city, and tired souls longing to recharge. At Sonya's Garden, you learn "the art of doing nothing."



SONYA'S GARDEN



**2. CHIC RETREAT** There are moments when all you want is a little time, privacy, and luxury away from your hectic work-and-play schedule. If Boracay is a little too "frenetic," and Palawan too "out there," then head to Bohol, a small, charming island quietly tucked into the belly of the Visayas. **THE ANANYANA**, a beach resort and spa, is an intimate hideaway where you can indulge all your senses: from total pampering at the herbal spa to non-limit diving in well-preserved coral reefs. Being there almost feels like being a guest in your rich friend's gorgeous beach house—its 10 rooms and two family rooms are replete with stylish details like old fragrant wood, soothing natural colors, and soft, organic shapes.

**3. THE BIJOU**  
There's an exquisite little trinket of a hotel down Roxas Boulevard, only a few steps away from Luneta Park. The **MIRAMAR HOTEL** is one of the few authentic 1930s Art Deco buildings left in downtown Manila and is worth checking out just for that—it's a glimpse into the city's glamorous past. Five-star it's not, but here's a fun idea: Why not check in during a long weekend and throw a small party with your closest pals? (Room



HACIENDA  
ISABELLA

rates are very friendly.) Then you can swan about the hotel's elegant atrium while drinking Champagne, listening to jazz, and bonding with friends. It's that kind of place.

**4. CLEANSING RITUAL**  
Considering getting rid of all those accumulated toxins? **THE FARM AT SAN BENITO** is the ultimate destination for detoxifying the body, clearing the mind, and nurturing the spirit. Even if they call themselves the "Hippocrates Health Resort of Asia," they almost make you forget

what you're there for because of the luxury-resort-like surroundings, well-appointed mini-villas, and sublime spa treatments. The restaurant, though, will remind you as they serve only raw—albeit very appetizing-looking—food (cooking food destroys enzymes, which are crucial to bodily functions). Choose from their menu of health and wellness services that may change your life (or at least your lifestyle).



THE FARM AT  
SAN BENITO

**5. SOMEWHERE IN TIME**  
Rouse your sense of history with a trip to **SITIO REMEDIOS**, an 18,000-square-meter "manmade heritage village resort" on the coast of Ilocos Norte. In an effort to recall the Ilocos of his childhood, owner Joven Cuanang, a respected doctor and art patron, recreated a quaint village complete with town plaza, a chapel modeled after the province's famous Paoay Church, and six houses, all built with vintage bricks and wood salvaged from old houses. Houses are furnished with old wooden furniture and decorated with crocheted bedspreads and tablecloths. Prepare to live like your grandparents did in their home province back in the old days.

**6. HACIENDA HIDEAWAY**  
Discover Old-World corners and some surprisingly modern moments at **HACIENDA ISABELLA**. This four-hectare property owned by chanteuse Kuh Ledesma has a charming Filipino-

Mediterranean mix of interiors, food, and atmosphere. With plenty of cozy nooks and picturesque settings, it's become a popular venue for wedding receptions, family gatherings, or out-of-town weekends. There are four minimally designed but cozy rooms in the main house, and 19 private villas scattered throughout the property. The restaurant (open to the public on weekends) serves "home cooking," using recipes from Kuh's own kitchen.

7. **THE NATURAL WAY**

Davao City is the largest city in the Philippines in terms of land area, so space isn't an issue here. It's home to **EDEN NATURE PARK**, a sprawling 80-hectare nature-themed resort located 3,000 feet above sea level, so it's got that fresh mountain air that city folk crave. Its accommodations range from deluxe to practical, and it has something for everyone: a hiking trail, swimming pool, and two campsites for the action-oriented; and gardens, a firefly sanctuary, fishing pond, and plenty of walking trails for nature lovers. There's also a Roman-style amphitheater, prayer gardens, and silent mountain ponds. Indeed Eden is a peaceful paradise...

8. **OUR HOUSE**

Balay means "house" in Cebuano and this unique little bed-and-breakfast certainly feels like home. **BALAY INDANG** evokes a traditional Filipino house, with lots of wood, capiz, and colored-glass windows. Look for the twist in the details: Buddhas on the floor, wooden mirrors, rustic white fabrics, and various objets d'art. Aside from the three cottages, there's also a restaurant, which serves home-cooked Filipino fare. After soaking up the indoor atmosphere, explore the expansive grounds, which include a swimming pool, a billiard pavilion, and a well-stocked fishing pond with Red Kingfish Tilapia.

9. **MODERN MANSION**

Inspired by Europe's concept of renting out private villas for the summer, one family decided to transform their resthouse in Tagaytay into **T**, a boutique home for hire—it's the ultimate in privacy. The Greek-Balearic-style house with white

walls and organic shapes was designed by acclaimed architect Budji Layug and was the first Asian home to be featured on the cover of *Architectural Digest* magazine 20 years ago. It sits on the edge of a cliff overlooking Taal lake and volcano, has the amenities of any spa or hotel, and, if you wish, can come with its own chef. Ahhh, this is the life...



T

10. **THE GENTLEMAN'S FARM**

Larry Cruz, iconic Manila restaurateur, went back to his roots in Pampanga province and opened **ABE'S FARM**, a resort reminiscent of the traditional Filipino resthouse. Named after his eminent father E. Aguilar Cruz (who was a writer, painter, and diplomat), the 40,000-square-meter farm in the foothills of Mount Arayat features genteel Filipino provincial

living at its best. Sleep in a traditional *bahay kubo* (nipa hut) or—for the more exotically inclined—in an authentic Ifugao hut, and experience *hilot* (traditional



ABE'S FARM

massages) sessions with coconut oil and banana leaves. They say Pampanga is a gourmet province, and the hearty Filipino food served at Abe's Farm proves it.—*additional reporting by Liza Ilarde*



EDEN NATURE PARK

Unique Accommodations Addressbook

Unusual or not, these accommodations still require a reservation

**ABE'S FARM** Barangay Ayala, Magalang, Pampanga, reservations at tel (2) 522-0403

**BALAY INDANG: THE RED GINGER FARM AND GARDEN** Indang, Cavite, tel (+63917) 837-4261, (+63919) 559-5884, (+63921) 980-7154

**EDEN NATURE PARK** Toril, Davao City, Davao, tel (82) 299-1020 or mobile (+63918) 930-7590, e-mail info@edennaturepark.com.ph, edennaturepark.com

**HACIENDA ISABELLA** 8 Carasuchi, Indang, Cavite, reservations at (2) 551-7253 to 55, e-mail jo2\_jacob@yahoo.com, verymalo@yahoo.com, haciendaisabella.com

**MIRAMAR HOTEL** 1034-36 Roxas Boulevard corner UN Ave., Ermita, Manila, tel (2) 523-4484, e-mail newmiramarhotel@yahoo.com

**SITIO REMEDIOS** Barangay Victoria, Currimao, Ilocos Norte, tel (+63917) 332-0217, sitioremedios.com

**SONYA'S GARDEN** Barangay Buck Estate, Alfonso, Cavite, tel (+63917) 532-9097, e-mail info@sonyagarden.com, sonyagarden.com

**T** Tagaytay City, Cavite, reservations at tel (+63922) 817-5142, e-mail info@chilline.com, chilline.com/tagaytay

**THE ANANYANA** Doljo Beach, Panglao Island, Bohol, tel (38) 502-8108, e-mail info@ananyana.com, ananyana.com

**THE FARM AT SAN BENITO** 119 Barangay Tipakan, Lipa City, Batangas, reservations at tel (2) 884-8074, e-mail info@thefarm.com.ph, thefarm.com.ph