



BORACAY'S POWER CRISIS SPARKS CALLS FOR LASTING SOLUTION

Energy Dept to prioritize nation's top tourism destination



A picture-perfect Nabaoy River, the lifeblood of a community that anchors their way of living. Simple, peaceful, and undisturbed.
Ritchel Casidsid Cahilig

In a separate development, a petition is circulating to “Save Nabaoy Watershed, Boracay's main water source.”

Story on page 10

BY FREIDA DARIO-SANTIAGO

Boracay Island, long regarded as the crown jewel of Philippine tourism, was plunged into a 49-hour blackout over the weekend of September 13–15, 2025.

The outage was caused by the Nabas-Unidos 69 kV transmission line tripping, which isolated the island from the power

grid. A temporary 800-meter overhead line was built along the Caticlan Airport runway to accelerate power restoration.

Aklan Electric Cooperative, Inc. (AKELCO) is the power distributor serving the province of Aklan, including Boracay Island. As a member-owned cooperative, it is responsible for delivering electricity to households, businesses and tourism establishments within its franchise area. It sources power through suppliers and the

National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) to maintain facilities and ensure a stable energy supply.

What began as an unscheduled power interruption turned into a full-blown power crisis that crippled the economy.

As authorities scrambled for stopgap measures, resorts turned to generators to appease frustrated guests. Power was restored only by Tuesday afternoon, exposing the fragility of Boracay's power infrastructure.



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Water Safety



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Boracay Women Paddlers
Conquer Iloilo Races



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INDULGE:
Top 7 Heavenly Desserts



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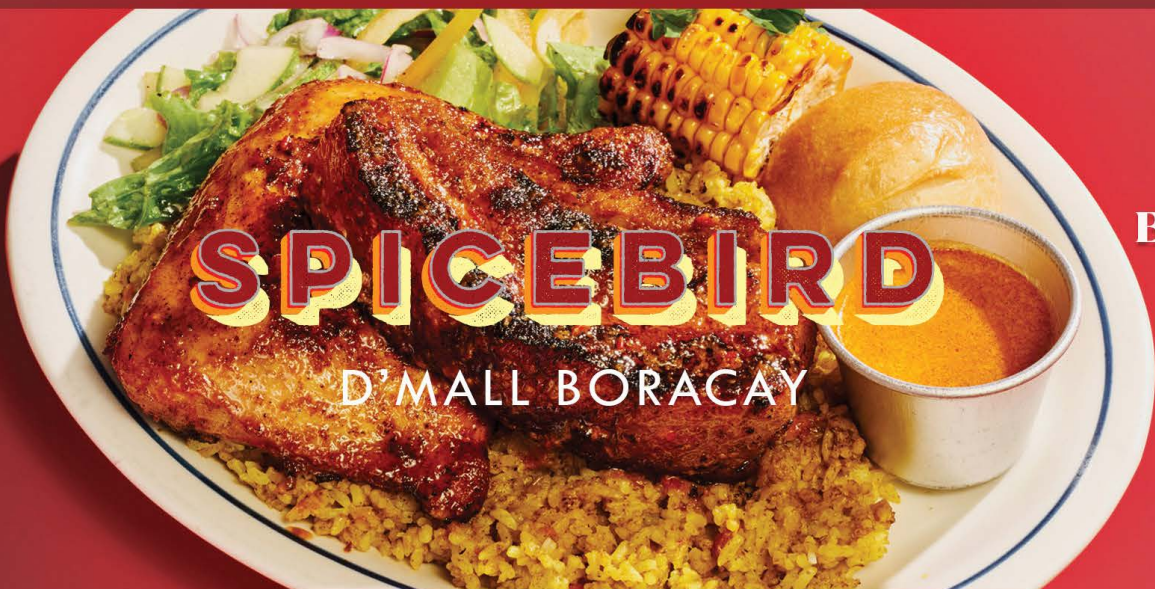
FEATURE:
Island Tails



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SPECIAL FEATURE:
Life by the River

“Worth
going to
Boracay
for”
pepper.



SPICEBIRD
D'MALL BORACAY

“A perfect day in
Boracay will always
consist of a
Spicebird meal”
Esquire

Editor's Note



Freida Dario-Santiago / Boracay Sun News

EMBRACING THE MERRY BER MONTHS

This October/November double issue highlights kindness and animal welfare as we mark three important global awareness events: Animal Welfare Month on Oct. 4 (page 16), Mental Health Awareness Day on Oct. 10 (page 14), and World Kindness Day on Nov. 13 (page 9).

Notable Philippine holidays include Bonifacio Day (Nov. 30), All Saints' Day on Nov. 1 and All Souls' Day (Nov. 2), and Halloween on Oct. 31.

Speaking of animal welfare, kudos to the organizers of the **Veterinary Mission Boracay**, Julia Lervik, Noa and Aquilla Macavinta and Rica Velasco! In just four days last August, the team treated 1,238 animals and completed 536 surgeries, an astounding achievement for the island's animal welfare. Special thanks to Dr. Deyven Oriondo, the veterinarians, volunteers, and supporters whose generosity and compassion made it possible.

Peaceful protest: a celebration of democracy

In this issue, we step out of our comfort zone to provide a platform to openly express outrage and protest on issues close to home. We confront the island's fragile power situation, from the crippling 49-hour blackout that plunged Boracay and nearby areas into darkness and caused significant financial losses, to the proposed hydropower plant that could impact the Nabaoy River (the vital source of potable water for Malay and Boracay) and watershed. (pages 10 & 11).

Righteous indignation

As I write this, my eyes are glued to the televised live coverages of the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee hearings into alleged plundering of government-funded flood control projects.

This takes corruption to a whole new level marked by abominable greed and unchecked wealth.

We rise before dawn, juggling family and work, dragging ourselves in even when sick because stopping isn't an option. Yet when the floods rise, stacks of cash meant to mitigate the problem allegedly end up on government tables or stashed in suitcases delivered to politicians, instead of building schools, hospitals, or real flood protection.

How could this have gone on for years? It's appalling to realize that for a God-fearing nation, we live among the worst kind of thieves, wolves in sheep's clothing (and *barang tagalogs*).

Surely, many are trembling in their Christian Louboutins as they bid farewell to their garages of luxury cars, hangars of private planes, and mansions crammed with gaudy art, wealth so obscene they could nearly erase the Philippines national debt and ensure every Filipino has a roof over their head.

Enough is enough. The plunderers must be held accountable. Jail time is not enough; every last asset needs to be returned to the people.

September 21: A country united

Last Sept. 21 marked a historic day of peaceful demonstrations that united the nation, as citizens braved Super Typhoon Nando to protest the massive and

mind-blowing systemic corruption that's been institutionalized under our noses for years and to demand accountability.

"He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it."
— Martin Luther King, Jr.

The battle cry echoed on the streets from city to city and across the islands with voices raised in unison: "*Ikulong mga kurakot* (Jail the corrupt)!"

The Boracay community showed their solidarity with close to a hundred who braved the *Habagat* winds and pelting rain in a prayer rally and unity walk. The silent procession made its way to the White Beach grotto where they formed a human chain and held up placards previously laid at the altar for participants to choose the message they wished to carry.

Chief of Police of Malay MPS, PLtCol. Alain Terence Licdan told *BSN*, "The gathering was calm and orderly, with only locals participating." Former Councilor Nenette Graf said, "No storm is stronger than a united community in prayer."

"Let our indignation spark a revolution of accountability."
—Former SC Justice Antonio Carpio

To our valued foreign guests, do not be alarmed.

This was not a protest against the Presidency of Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. Let's not forget, it was he who mounted a campaign to expose those behind the corruption that has robbed the Filipino people blind with impunity. He even famously said that if he wasn't president, he'd be marching with the people on Sept. 21.

Unfortunately the turmoil has begun to raise concerns among foreign investors about governance and transparency in large infrastructure programs.

South Korean President Lee Jae-myung has ordered the suspension of a \$510 million loan to the Philippines for a civil engineering project, citing potential corruption and mismanagement. The loan was intended to finance the construction 350 modular steel bridges across rural areas in the Philippines, aimed at improving access for farmers and their agricultural products.

Keep the faith

Sept 21 was a litmus test to show how strongly people feel about the issues. Now that we've had our peaceful demonstrations, let's allow due process to take its course, and pray for peace and cool heads to prevail. It's time to trust Sen. Ping Lascon (known for high-profile anti-corruption campaigns during his tenure as the PNP chief), DPWH Sec. Vince Dizon who said "I want to put the fear of God in them," and the Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI) to get to the bottom of everything. Indeed, no one is above scrutiny, and contrary to what Sen. Erwin Tulfo said, no one is above the law.

Former associate justice of the Supreme Court, Antonio Carpio said in a post: "We, the people, are the true power of this nation.

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Truth in Journalism.

We can take back what is rightfully ours—a government that serves, not plunders. Let our anger be our fuel. Let our indignation spark a revolution of accountability."

This historic event will define not only the presidency but the Philippine democratic system now, and what the Philippines deserves in 2028. Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!"

To our valued visitors, welcome to Boracay Island!

It's time to fasten your seatbelt and enjoy the illimitable joyride that is Boracay Island, and for the whirlwind month of October, punctuated by the most highly anticipated Halloween parties that mark the beginning of the longest holiday season in the world.

I leave you with a few wise words from the late Anthony Bourdain: "Travel changes you. As you move through this life and this world you change things slightly, you leave marks behind, however small.

And in return, life—and travel—leaves marks on you."

I hope you return home feeling different, that something within you has shifted. Maybe a switch has been turned on, or a dial gently moved because you were moved by the experience called Boracay.

Vibe high, dive deep!

Peace and good vibes,

Editor-In-Chief
Email me at fvd@boracaysunnews@gmail.com.

Boracay Sun News is committed to presenting all sides without endorsing political or social agendas. Information is accurate as of publication and written and edited by real people, not AI.

IN MEMORIAM

Rest in peace Steve



Last September 15, Boracay lost another legend, Stephen "Steve" Zafir (June 8, 1943 – September 15, 2025).

Best known as the jolly man and father figure behind Olé Boracay, he was a good man. Our hearts and prayers go out to his wife Ana, son Kyle. The wonderful memories, laughter, and your unforgettable dance will remain indelible, and you will be sorely missed. We will do our best to keep the "Steve spirit" alive.

Rest in peace, Steve, and try not to keep the old guys in Heaven up too late. Cheers and Godspeed!



Jack Jarilla

continued from front page

A makeshift row of 16 electric posts now lines the edge of Caticlan Airport, a temporary measure to replace a damaged underground cable that plunged Boracay into power woes in recent weeks. The lights are back on, but officials admit the fix is fragile, and business and tourism leaders are demanding nothing less than a permanent solution.

Although electricity has been restored, National Electrification Administration (NEA) administrator Antonio Almeda described the measure as merely a “Band-Aid solution,” stressing that the underground cables within the airport vicinity must be unearthed and repaired. Authorities are now studying the timeline and cost of the project.

Tourism Secretary Cristina Frasco warned that reliable power is non-negotiable if Boracay is to keep its global reputation. “We need to provide our islands and destinations with stable electricity to ensure tourists are safe and can fully enjoy their stay. As the country’s top tourist destination, Boracay sustains thousands of jobs and livelihoods for local communities and contributes significantly to the national economy. It is imperative that we provide the island with dependable infrastructure and efficient services,” she stressed.

The NEA has argued that responsibility lies with the NGCP, as the damaged line qualifies as a transmission asset. NGCP spokesperson Atty. Cynthia Alabanza confirmed the grid operator’s readiness to step in. “If this is indeed a transmission asset, then NGCP will not turn away from its responsibility,” she said.

Energy Secretary Sharon Garin, however, assured that the Department of Energy (DOE), NEA, AKELCO, and NGCP are treating the matter as a top priority.

Experts have warned of the urgent need to fix the underground cable before the *Amihan* season, when strong winds and storms could topple the temporary posts carrying electricity to the island. And while energy officials determine how long it will take and how much it will cost, business owners appeal for a permanent solution.

Boracay, one of the Philippines’ top tourist destinations, remains a key economic driver for Western Visayas. Stakeholders insist that only a permanent fix will protect the island’s tourism-dependent economy from further disruption and is the only way to shield both the island’s visitors and its residents from being left in the dark again.

Brownouts for breakfast

Boracay’s residents and private sector are no strangers to power outages. In fact, we have brownouts for breakfast. However, the most recent 49-hour power blackout struck a nerve—a live wire, so to speak, among the dedicated tourism workers who work tirelessly, day and night, 365 days a year, and the thousands of inconvenienced families and tourists.

Boracay is far more than a stretch of sand; it is a national treasure and a major economic driver. Ensuring its energy stability is therefore not optional but an urgent priority.

People are fed up, and the clamor for change has reached its tipping point.

Apologies and promises: Boracay deserves better

On the third day, the DOE served a press release for breakfast: “Power will soon be restored in Boracay and neighboring cities. Our linemen and personnel from various agencies have been working non-stop throughout the night, even interrupted by the heavy rains and winds. Nearly 20 new poles and power lines have been erected to light up the island of Boracay again.”

For brunch, an apology from AKELCO General Manager Atty. Ariel Gepty over *Radyo Todo Aklan* for failing to restore

electricity by midnight, as promised: “I ask for forgiveness because we committed that power would be restored by 12 midnight, but we could not continue since it might cause an accident, as two poles were already leaning.”

At long last, power was restored at 2:53 p.m., after the grueling 49-hour blackout.

“Safety guided every call we made, including last night’s brief pause during high tide. Power is restored, and our teams remain on site to stabilize the system and complete permanent repairs,” said Sec. Garin.

Sec. Frasco acknowledged the efforts of the DOE, NGCP, AKELCO, the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP), and the concerned local government units in working to restore power.

On behalf of the Boracay community, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated teams from AKELCO, NGCP and other agencies, the line workers, engineers, patrol and restoration crews who worked tirelessly under challenging conditions to restore electricity.

Power Struggle: Urgent call to permanently end Boracay’s power woes

Every hour without power brings hundreds of thousands in losses, disrupts daily life and tarnishes Boracay’s global reputation.

As soon as power was restored, social media and chat rooms lit up with comments from residents and business owners, lamenting the disruption of the economy from cancellations and customers walking out, ATMs going offline, disconnection from internet and mobile data services, unnecessary costs on diesel to run gensets, losses from damaged appliances and even disruptions in medical services. Add to this, the constant anxiety from on-again, off-again power.

The people are outraged and demand change. For the cost of electricity, the people are demanding real, lasting and sustainable solutions and reliable service with foresight, focus and accountability.

Let us be clear: This was not an isolated incident but part of a long and painful cycle of power interruptions that paralyze the island.

On May 4–5, Malay residents endured a grueling 19-hour power outage—the longest of the year, until now. The incident sparked a flood of complaints from netizens and reached national news outlets, echoing decades-long grievances and frustrations with AKELCO.

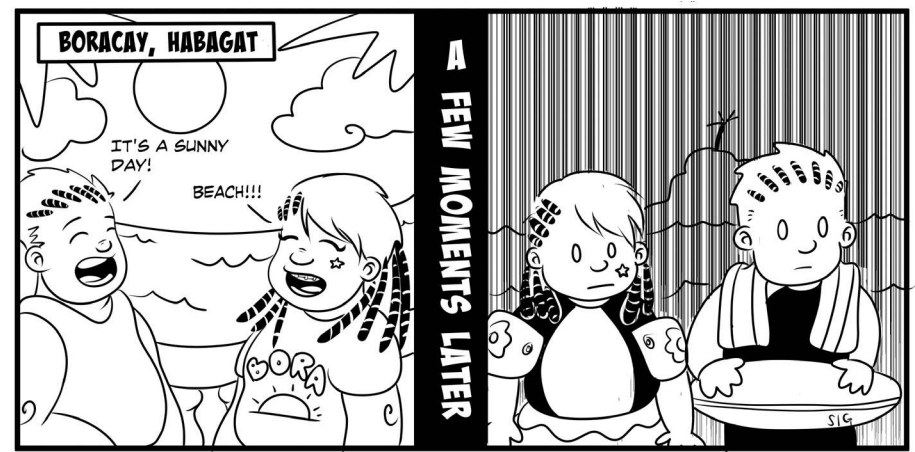
In *Boracay Sun News’* August/September issue, we conducted a community pulse survey to gather public sentiment on the problem of frequent power outages. Read the full article from the website: www.boracaysunnews.com/newspaper.

Stakeholders appeal to government

Business stakeholders are calling for urgent, long-term energy solutions that safeguard livelihoods and the island’s status as a world-class destination, without sacrificing environmental preservation.

An equally urgent concern is the exorbitant and soaring cost of electricity,

SUN TOONS Lightening up the day with a perky dose of humor



“Habagat Hit” by Sigmund Torre

which continues to burden households and businesses of all sizes.

The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry-Boracay (PCCI-Boracay) echoes the voice of businesses, tourism stakeholders, and residents in a letter to DOE Sec. Garin, dated Sept. 17.

The letter emphasizes that Boracay stakeholders feel that persistent power outages are undermining livelihoods, public services, and the island’s competitiveness, and urges the government to deliver long-term, reliable energy solutions.

“It is unacceptable that a world-class destination remains wholly dependent on a single transmission corridor, with no embedded generation capacity, no redundancy, and an aging distribution infrastructure. The people and businesses of Boracay deserve a reliable, stable, and sustainable power supply, and the government has the mandate to deliver this.”

It outlined a call to action for the DOE, NGCP and all involved agencies to:

- Fast-track 138-kV line, set a clear timeline
- Expand embedded and renewable energy systems
- Improve coordination and accountability during emergencies
- Ensure better service, reliability

“Another prolonged blackout during peak season will be catastrophic to the island’s economy and reputation,” they said.

The DOE responded in a letter dated Sept. 19, signed by Luningning Baltazar of the EPIMB, to acknowledge the stakeholder group’s concerns and said they will convene stakeholders to map out permanent solutions for the damaged transmission line, including a detailed work plan, activity timeline, and clear assignment of responsibilities.

What’s next?

It is crucial to see the perennial problem for what it is, and for decisive intervention by the national government NOW, as it did in Siquijor when Pres. Marcos, Jr. ordered the NEA to resolve the power crisis without delay last June, and launched an investigation into Siquijor Island Power Corporation (SIPCOR).

Let’s not wait for the next “unscheduled power interruption” (unfortunately only a matter of time) or the next power crisis.

NOW is the time for long-overdue infrastructure upgrades to secure a stable and sustainable power supply.

Boracay is more than just an island; it generates billions of pesos in revenue for the nation. Allowing it to suffer from unstable electricity is a disservice not only to the community that calls it home but also to the

entire country that gains from its success.

Consistent and reliable power is not a privilege; it is the foundation of economic activity, the lifeline of businesses, and the key to sustaining Boracay’s stature as a premier global destination. Temporary stopgap measures are not enough, Boracay needs a lasting solution NOW.

In a letter to PCCI-Boracay, NGCP reported that the Nabas-Caticlan-Boracay Transmission Line Project is 91.2% complete, with full completion targeted by August 2026.

At Gov. Enrique Miraflores’ request, NGCP, AKELCO, ERC, TransCo, and NEA met on Sept. 25 to tackle Boracay’s power outage. NGCP proposed a long-term solution: a 650-meter underground cable to replace AKLECO’s damaged 69kV line.

NGCP also backed the entry of new embedded and renewable energy systems, saying they will facilitate System Impact Studies once grid connection applications are filed.

Another 25-Years

AKELCO announced last Sept. 20, that Pres. Marcos, Jr. signed Republic Act No. 12302, granting AKELCO a 25-year franchise* renewal that allows them to construct, establish, operate, and manage power distribution for end-users across 17 municipalities in Aklan province. This development authorizes AKELCO to operate and maintain power distribution systems in its service areas.

AKELCO’s corporate slogan is “Bringing you light, serving you right.”

Moving forward, AKELCO invited PCCI-Boracay to a stakeholders’ meeting to address concerns raised by the business group.

Hopefully, this recent crisis proves to be the catalyst for change, paving the way towards the light at the end of what has been a long and dark tunnel. 🌱

It's frustrating on our side as business owners we are suffering from the effects of this outages and unprofessional costumer service. But wait, if we're even a little late with payments to the provider, we get cut off immediately, but when it's their service that fails we have no recourse. Its time for a change and improvements.

Reply 7

My husband needed xray on his hand since a van door accidentally slammed his fingers. But alas, the clinic cannot run its xray on genset. The resto we had dinner reservation in ran its genset for 1 full day but had to close on Saturday evening since the genset cannot handle 2 full days of no power. This is a terrible experience

*In the Philippines, electric power distribution utilities like Meralco or electric cooperatives such as AKELCO are typically granted a 25-year franchise by Congress. After that period, the franchise must be renewed through another law passed by Congress and signed by the President.

NEWS

Boracay Expects Surge in Indian and Russian Tourists by October

BY JUN N. AGUIRRE

The local government of Malay is confident about a tourism surge from Indian and Russian tourists by the last quarter of this year.

At a press conference organized by Oneklik Events and the Global Tourism Business Association (GTBA) last September 26-28 in Manila, Malay Mayor Frolibar Bautista told the *Boracay Sun News (BSN)* that Russian airline Irareo will be flying to the Kalibo International Airport (KIA) from Irkutsk and Khabarovsk starting October.

Other presser panelists included Department of Trade and Industry Director Aleem Guiapal, Philip Gejon of the Guam Visitors Bureau, Indonesian Ambassador Agus Widjojo, Cambodian Embassy Second Secretary Heng Pisey, and Vietnam Embassy representative Vu Thanh Dat.

The press conference coincided with the Travel Sales Expo which featured a booth showcasing Boracay Island.

“This commitment from Russia gives us confidence that more European tourists will visit Boracay,” Bautista added.

For his part, Ivanovich Agote, Tourism Department representative told *BSN* that their department is preparing for the surge of Indian tourists this year.

“Last August 5, the Republic of the Philippines and the Republic of India reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral tourism ties with the exchange of the signed Implementation Program on Tourism Cooperation

for the years 2025 to 2028,” said Agote.

The signing of the ceremonial exchange of the signed agreement was part of President Marcos, Jr.’s state visit to India.

Prior to the signing last June, the Department of Foreign Affairs announced that the Philippines has granted visa-free privileges for Indian nationals for tourism purposes.

According to the policy, Indian nationals may enter the Philippines without a visa for a non-extendible and non-convertible period of 14 days for tourism purposes (and 30 days for AJACSSUK visas or residence permits), upon presenting a passport valid for at least six (6) months beyond the contemplated stay, confirmed hotel booking, proof of financial capacity, and return or onward ticket to the next country of destination.

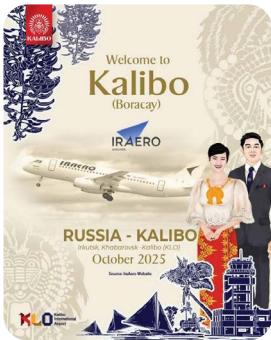
Indian nationals who are eligible for e-Visas may also apply through the official Philippine e-Visa website evisa.gov.ph. The DFA reminds that e-Visas may not be extended or converted to other visa-based stay or other admission status categories.

The Implementation Program outlines various joint initiatives between the Philippines and India, including the exchange of best practices in areas such as wellness tourism, MICE, cruise, education, culture, adventure, as well as sustainable and responsible tourism. The program also highlights mutual efforts to encourage exchanges between tourism professionals and stakeholders, joint promotion and marketing, education and training, and tourism management and operations.

Based on DOT data, India arrivals to the Philippines reached 51,116 from January to July 2025. With the easing of visa restrictions and establishment of direct flights between Delhi and Manila, the Philippines anticipates a steady growth in Indian arrivals in the coming years. 🌿



Pres. Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a state visit last August
 📷 Travel World Online



Boracay to Welcome More Taiwanese Tourists via Cruise Ships

BY JUN N. AGUIRRE

The Taiwanese embassy in Manila has pledged to bring more Taiwanese tourists to Boracay and other destinations in the country through cruise ship tourism.

In his speech during the opening program of the Travel Sale Expo year III held at the SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City last September 26, he said that starting October, cruise ships from Taiwan will sail towards Manila and Boracay.

“Around 15 cruise ships are coming to the Philippines from October 2025 to March 2026, carrying 30,000 Taiwanese tourists,” Taiwanese Ambassador Wallace Minn-Gan Chow said.

Chow said this during the opening program of the third edition of the Travel Sale Expo (TSE) last September 26 at the SM Megamall. This year’s theme was “Your Gateway to the World.”

Niven Maquirang, acting chief of the Port Cruise Ship Operation and Special Projects of Aklan was in Taiwan last September 25 to meet with the Association for Cruise Ship Development and to visit two major cruise



Michelle Taylan, GBTA president and TSE organizer holds a copy of *Boracay Sun News*



Rachelle Lopez and Niven Maquirang meet with Taiwanese counterparts Tsu-Chiang Chen and JP Tsieng in Taiwan to promote Boracay as a cruise ship destination.



Boracay Island booth was recognized as Best Booth at this year’s tourism expo.



LGU-Malay received various awards

Experience) sites. “We are also expecting visits from Rachelle Lopez, CEO of WMOC Group of Companies and JP Tseng, chairman of the association for Taiwan’s Cruise Development, in preparation for the arrivals of the delegates,” Maquirang added.

Senator Shelly Calvo, majority whip of the 38th Guam Legislature, vowed to help strengthen Philippine tourism, including Boracay, as chair of the committee on arts and culture. “I can legislate in Guam to connect Asian destinations with the United States. Guam is the only Asian soil in the US. I have also urged diplomats to support me in this endeavor,” said Calvo.

DOT Secretary Christina Frasco who was the event’s keynote speaker, said that she and the President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., welcome the initiatives that strengthen tourism.

“We have so many challenges in tourism but we strive to push it because it creates a ripple effect to the economy of the country. Tourism not only benefits resorts and hotels but also frontliners, farmers, and small entrepreneurs, among others,” she added. 🌿

Malay Police Station Welcomes New Chief

BY JUN N. AGUIRRE

The Malay Police Station (MPS) welcomed the newly installed Chief of Police (COP), PLtCol. Alain Terence Licdan last September 10, 2025.

In an interview with *Boracay Sun News*, Bautista welcomed Licdan as the new MPS chief. He was reportedly endorsed by Philippine National Police (PNP) Regional Office 6 (PRO-6, Western Visayas) Regional Director Brig. Gen. Josefino Ligan.

“I am honored to be given the opportunity to serve the people of Malay. I look forward to working closely with our local officials and stakeholders to ensure peace, security and order in our town,” Licdan told the members of the Sangguniang Bayan of Malay in a courtesy call on September 12.

Prior to Boracay Island, Licdan was assigned to the Northern Police District in Metro Manila.

Disaster response mandate

The PNP PRO-6 has urged the MPS to strengthen its response during natural calamities.

The police mandate to be vigilant was handed by Brig. Gen. Ligan during a visit to Boracay on September 26, to monitor the safety of residents and stranded tourists during typhoon Ompong.

Ligan told the MPS to coordinate with the Municipal Disaster Risks Reduction Management Office (MDRRMO) to ensure the safety of the community and to assist in evacuations, especially of the vulnerable sector, including the elderly, children, pregnant women and persons with disability.

Crackdown on illegal workers

In August 2025, the Malay Police facilitated the launch of the Boracay Enforcement Team (BET) that serves as a task force against illegal workers on the resort island. The BET includes the Malay LGU, MDRRMO, Coast Guard, PDEA, DENR and Municipal Health Office.

Bautista announced the strict

monitoring of workers permits prior to entering the island starting September 1.

On September 5, the BET team found violators while patrolling at the beach. Two peddlers were found to have no business permits, while the others failed to present workers’ permits and were handed a first offense warning. Penalties include a Php2,500 fine for the second offense and a business closure on the third offense.

Curfew for minors

It was announced on August 28 that the curfew for minors has been revived in the 17 barangays of Malay, from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m.

The Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) is strictly enforcing the curfew for minors, in line with municipal ordinance and national directives. This initiative helps keep minors safe, reduces their exposure to potential harm, and fosters a more disciplined and secure community environment.

They call on parents, guardians, and



the community to remain vigilant and cooperative, emphasizing that child safety is a shared responsibility. Minors caught loitering during curfew hours are advised to go home.

In a related report, the Department of Tourism-Western Visayas received complaints about fake Facebook pages of certain Boracay hotels that were accepting payments for hotel reservations.

“We strongly urge our visitors to remain vigilant and ensure that they are accessing only the official social media accounts of the establishment,” the tourism department said. 🌿

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Central Plaza, D'mall of Boracay



SC Dismisses Multiple Complaints Vs. Malay Mayor

BY JUN N. AGUIRRE

Malay Mayor Frolibar Bautista welcomes the decision of the Supreme Court (SC) to dismiss multiple complaints filed against him in 2021.

The case was filed by Oliver and Corazon Carpio-Zamora, president and corporate secretary of the ECOS Sanitary Landfill and Waste Management Corporation. The ECOS was the contractor of the Sanitary Landfill in Brgy. Kabulihan, Malay Aklan.

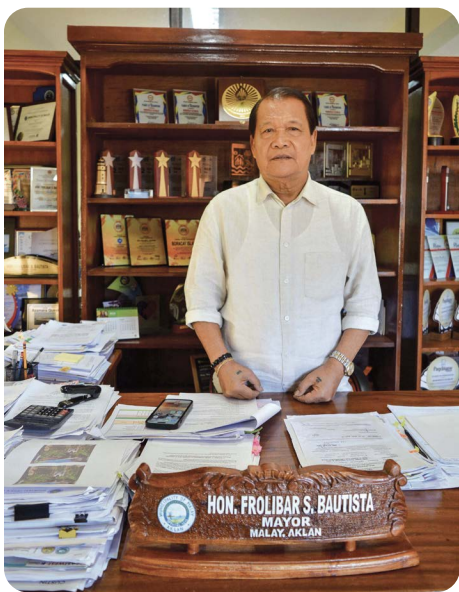
"It is clear that we did nothing wrong," Bautista told the *Boracay Sun News* in a phone interview days after the ruling was announced on September 18, 2025.

The Zamora couple claimed that Bautista and other LGU officials allegedly violated Sections 3(a) and (e) of Republic Act No. 3019, or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, grave coercion, and usurpation of real rights in property, citing lack of probable cause and substantial evidence.

According to a Facebook post by *Batas PH*, the SC held that the court does not interfere with the Office of the Ombudsman (OMB)'s exercise of prosecutory authority, as the law gives the Ombudsman wide latitude to act on criminal complaints against public officials.

In short, the SC ruled that it would not interfere in the Ombudsman's power to investigate and file cases against public officials, since the law grants the Ombudsman full authority over such matters.

The 26-page decision was penned by Associate Justice Ramon Paul Hernando, the SC's First Division.



Jack Jarilla

The spouses Zamora entered into a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) Agreement with the LGU of Malay for the hauling of solid waste and the design, construction, management, and operation of an Eco-Tourism Engineered Sanitary Landfill.

Under the said agreement, the Malay LGU would pay ECOS tipping fees for the maintenance and upkeep of the sanitary landfill site and hauling fees for the collection and transport of garbage from Boracay Island.

In May 2021, the ECOS couple alleged that the LGU represented by Bautista was regularly delayed in its payment for the landfill services rendered, which led to the accumulation of an almost PhP20 million running balance.

Despite insistent demands, the Malay LGU allegedly ignored them, which prompted ECOS to issue a Notice of Default that sought a rectification plan within 10 days from notice by the Malay LGU.

"The LGU did not immediately act on the request for a rectification plan and instead issued a letter requesting a joint inspection and validation of the ECOS landfill based on the previous assessment that ECOS is non-compliant with their environmental compliance certificate," the SC stated.

Oliver refused to conduct the joint inspection and validation, citing the LGU's default in payments as the reason behind his refusal. He then informed the Malay LGU that ECOS would be closing the landfill.

On June 9, 2021, Bautista informed ECOS that the LGU would be exercising its step-in rights. ECOS claimed that representatives from the municipality cut the padlock of ECOS' gate and illegally removed the backhoe of GIC that was

blocking the road. The municipal officials were also involved in ejecting them from their own landfill property.

Aggrieved, Oliver and Corazon filed multiple criminal and administrative complaints against Bautista and other municipal officials before the Ombudsman. Later on, the Ombudsman dismissed the complaints, as it found no probable cause for the case to prosper. This prompted the complainants to elevate the case before the SC.

The SC ruling held that the charges of graft, grave coercion, and usurpation of real rights in the property be dismissed due to the failure of the complainants to prove that all the elements of these crimes were present.

The SC also emphasized that a public official enjoys the presumption of regularity in the discharge of their official duties and functions, and this presumption can only be reversed by clear and convincing evidence to the contrary. ✨

Malay Police Monitoring Remaining Perpetrators in the Slovak Killing

BY JUN N. AGUIRRE

The Special Investigation Task Group (SITG): Michaela Mickova investigating the death of 23-year-old Slovakian tourist Michaela Mickova, through the Malay Police Station, continues to monitor the two suspects who remain at large.

Mickova was found dead at an abandoned structure on March 12. Police immediately conducted a hot pursuit operation leading to the arrests of two suspects.

In an interview in July, Police Lieutenant Jesus Cambay III, deputy chief for operations told *Boracay Sun News* that so far there were two suspects in custody.

According to Cambay, the two admitted to their participation in the killing of Mickova, while two other persons of interest were pinpointed by the two suspects earlier detained.

"The at-large perpetrators are still in Malay. They know that they are being investigated and are aware that they could be arrested anytime, as soon as we have compiled sufficient evidence against them," said Cambay.

As of press time, the mobile phone of Mickova which could prove crucial in the investigation remains missing.

According to the police, on the affidavit of confession of one of the suspects, a 28-year-old with the code name "Jai" pointed to his two friends "Allen" and "Rene" as those behind the sexual assault and murder of Michaela.

Jai was arrested during a drug buy-bust operation in Barangay Sambiray, Malay on March 14. He said he decided to tell the police what he knew about the crime as his conscience was bothering him.

His testimony recounts that on March 10, he invited Allen and Rene to a drinking spree at a friend's house but it was canceled because the friend was not there. They decided to hang out for a while until they met Mickova outside her hotel where Rene introduced him to Mickova.

Jai together with Allen, Rene and Michaela walked until they came to the old structure. Two days later, Michaela was



Michaela Mickova

found dead at the scene. Jai alleged that he left the two perpetrators, sensing that something bad might happen.

According to Police Captain Aubrey Ayon, who serves as the spokesperson for the Mickova task force, the DNA samples collected from the victim's fingernails did not match those of the two suspects.

So, despite the confession, the police are unable to charge the suspects for the killing of Michaela due to lack of evidence.* The suspects are detained only for selling illegal drugs.

Cambay laments that despite efforts on the part of the PNP to stay in contact with the family of the victim, they seldom respond. "We want the public to know that we are doing everything we can to solve the case of Michaela," Cambay added. ✨

Boracay Sun News strongly condemns this tragic and heinous crime and urges the public to report anything they might know, or might have seen or heard, whether before, during or after the crime was committed, that could help in the investigation and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Malay Police Station: (+63 998) 967 3667

**The Constitution and jurisprudence demand corroborating evidence to avoid wrongful conviction. Under Philippine law, an extrajudicial confession (one made outside of court, e.g. to police) is not enough to convict unless it is corroborated by supporting physical evidence or testimony to prove the crime really happened.*

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ISLAND LIFE

Safety First: Lessons from Another Sea Accident

BY FREIDA DARIO-SANTIAGO

The Boracay Island community is saddened by another senseless death when a speedboat allegedly collided with a fishing boat off the coast of Sitio Diniwid, Brgy. Yapak last September 15. The 25-year-old victim was identified as Melfred Vicente from Brgy. Cubay Sur.

According to information obtained by *RMN DYKR Kalibo* from the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)-Caticlan, the incident happened at around 3 p.m. while the victim was fishing with a speargun. He was found floating in the water bearing wounds believed to have been caused by a speedboat propeller.

In a courtesy call to RAdm. Leonard Tirol of the PCGA 609 Squadron on Sept. 18, the newly installed PCG updated that they have filed their report and the incident is now a Maritime Police concern.



Out of respect for the victim and his family and the ongoing investigation, *BSN* will withhold further details at this time. We remind the public to avoid speculation

or spreading unverified information and to wait for the official report.

An avoidable tragedy

Anyone who has been on water activities knows that often, the private speedboats ferrying tourists to their hotels are often speeding very close to the shore and to other vessels.

A netizen posted, “The speedboats are too close to shore plus they go very fast!” Another said, “Whenever I do my long-distance swims, I see various boats speeding within the restricted swimming area. It’s as if the drivers of those boats expect the swimmers to evade them instead of the other way around.”

In April 2023, a similar incident occurred when an Ati chieftain died in a boat collision, allegedly fishing at night without lights, while his companion and son-in-law survived and served as the primary witness. A criminal complaint was filed against the skipper of the speedboat who made no attempt to rescue the victims and instead left the scene of the incident. The skipper’s employer later expressed their sympathies and offered support for the victim’s family.

A resident said, “Nobody wants these incidents to happen but Boracay waters are very busy with speedboats, sailboats, and leisure boats so changes need to be implemented or it will happen again.”

Urgent call for better enforcement of sea safety regulations

In October 2024, Capt. Rodolfo dela



Freida Dario-Santiago

Peña, Jr., then acting commander of PCG-Aklan, enforced regulations for speedboat safety in Boracay, including speed limits and a one-entry/one-exit system for busy sea lanes to reduce the risk of accidents and improve safety and order.

To further ensure that Boracay’s waters are safe for everyone, we call on the PCG to enforce the regulations more effectively, especially the speed limits for vessels operating in the Boracay area, and particularly in the swimming areas

close to the beaches, as well as the high-traffic areas between the island and the mainland town of Malay.

A good way to start is to educate sea vessel operators (captains, skippers that transport hotel guests and operate water sports activities), and create awareness campaigns for the diving community, fisherfolk and the general public, and to mark designated sea and swimming lanes with clear markers such as flags and buoys. 🌿



SAFETY REMINDERS

Boracay Sun News approached RAdm. Leonard Tirol, for clarity on the PCG’s sea vessel regulations and safety measures.

- Swim close to the lifeguard flags and towers. Lifeguards are responsible for regulating the swimming areas.
- Swimmers, fishermen and divers must observe the “NO SWIM ZONE” around 300 meters offshore because that is the exclusive “NAUTICAL HIGHWAY” for speedboats, including resort service boats, leisure boats and other vessels.
- Fishing boats and other vessels are strictly prohibited within the “NO SWIM ZONE” and “NAUTICAL HIGHWAY.”
- Boats are not allowed within the 300-meter swimming area. At night, they should have bright lights when crossing the “NAUTICAL HIGHWAY” so other boats see them and know that they are there.



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My Phone Went Diving

BY ABIGAIL LEI

I was just about to hop onto the boat for a fun dive with guests when suddenly, I realized my two phones had plunged into the water, waist-deep.

I quickly took my phones out of the bag and wiped them dry. One was definitely dead, but the other was still working and I was still able to snap a photo right before hopping onboard. Then, after a bit of a flicker, it died on me, too.

Because I was too excited about the dive, I didn't think much of the phones right then. I simply towed them dry and put them in the rice container on the boat. Thank goodness the boatmen had one aboard.

After the 40-minute dive and post-dive must-dos, I headed home and placed my phones in my rice box. I tried to turn both phones on. No go. I tried to charge both phones. No such luck.

Because I waited three days before taking them to the repair shop, some major parts had to be replaced, costing me PhP12,000. Ouch.

Here's what I learned throughout the ordeal and from the certified technicians:

DO

Dry your unit with a towel or cotton shirt. Dab and not rub, to prevent accidentally pushing any liquid into the unit's sensitive parts. Immediately taking them out of the water ensures no further liquid will seep into the inlets. Also, avoid shaking your phone as this may actually cause trapped liquid to sink further into nooks and crannies.

DON'T

Rice may be the go-to drying agent we firmly believe in but repair technicians would rather have us put the phone in a pouch or container with silica gel for 24-48 hours. While rice may help with absorbing moisture, it also introduces dust and dry starch into your phone's cracks and crevices. These minute particles trapped with moisture are a bad combination.



ecoATM.com

DO

Take off your phone case and other protective accessories, as they may trap more liquid.

DON'T

Never attempt to power your phone on, even when you have already left it to dry for a day or two, nor should you charge it, as this may cause parts to get short-circuited.

DO

Take out your SIM and memory card. Remember to dab off (don't shake) any drops that would come from these ports.

DON'T

Never blow- or sun-dry your phone. Remember that heat and electronics never mix well.

DO

Bring your unit right away to a certified phone repair shop or technician.

DON'T

NEVER submerge your phone underwater. Can "Water-resistant" phones be used when diving or swimming? That's a big NO. Even "waterproof" phones still need to have an underwater casing to be extra sure.

DO

When traveling to island getaways, know that your phone may or will get wet. Must have: waterproof pouch or phone case, preferably one that has a floater in case it slides off your hands and into the water.

DON'T

Better yet, don't use your phone for near- or in-water activities, and invest instead in an underwater camera. Remember, pressure underwater is greater than on the surface and this may temporarily or permanently affect functions on your phone.

Overall, we simply need to be mindful of our phones especially when we are on the move. Not only do we avoid losing them but it also ensures we don't incur unnecessary spending, and adding them to the planet's electronic wasteland. 🌱

DIGITAL LIFE

Lost your phone? Don't panic! Miracles still happen and there are good people out there

BY FREIDA DARIO-SANTIAGO

If you've lost a mobile phone before, you know how upsetting it can be. Nothing—and I mean, absolutely NOTHING could make you feel better, and you won't be able to focus on anything else except finding it.

It happened to me, and I was a total mess,

helpless and useless. After retracing my steps again and again, exhausting all possibilities (even checking CCTV footage of areas I passed), I reported it to the local radio station and the tricycle association, thinking I might have left it in an e-trike. Dizzy from stress



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phone will ring for five minutes even if set to silent.

How I found my phone

What worked for me was **SmartThings Find** (smarthingsfind.samsung.com). This tool can locate devices even when they're not connected to a network. Once the app pinpointed a location, I copied the coordinates to Google Maps for a precise location and satellite image.

The app also let me lock my phone while still tracking it. In Lost Mode, you can remotely display a custom message with a callback number, which is what I did and what my finder said really helped.



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and furious at myself, I was about to give up when my husband decided to check the police station's lost & found.

Before he left, I opened the Samsung locator app, which pinpointed my phone's location. The moment I saw the location marker on my laptop screen, I swear I heard a choir of angels singing!

As it turned out, I simply dropped it somewhere. Luckily, an honest person saw it, picked it up, and kept it safe overnight. The next day, she returned home from work, saw my messages, and immediately called the number I left (my husband's). They met up, and she handed the phone back.

Thank you so much to my superhero husband and to my good Samaritan, **Christine Bolante!**

How to find a lost phone that's turned off

Both Androids and iPhones have built-in tools to help locate missing devices even if they're offline.

How to find a lost iPhone

The **Find My iPhone** tool is the easiest way to track your iPhone even if it's turned off or has a dead battery.

1. Go to [iCloud.com](https://icloud.com) and sign in.
2. Tap "All Devices" and select your lost phone.
3. A map will show the last known location.

If the device is offline, the map displays where it was before shutting down. You'll also get an email if/when it powers on again. To activate this, choose "Notify me when found."

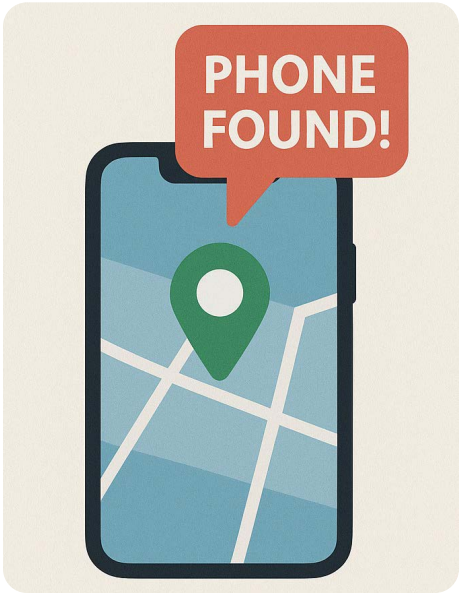
How to find a lost Android phone

For Android, use the **Find My Device** site and log in with the Google account linked to your phone.

Select your lost device from the menu.

A map will appear pinpointing the location of your phone.

If/when nearby, tap "Play Sound." Your



Other useful SmartThings features include "Lock power off" (prevents anyone from turning off your phone) and "Lock Samsung Pass" (protects stored passwords and autofill data).

TIPS

- Charge your phone before leaving home so you can call or ring it if misplaced.
- Back up your data regularly.
- Don't rush to delete files; your phone can still be tracked and controlled offline through apps, Google, or your network provider.
- According to the Boracay police station, they can act on a report and conduct a search operation, as long as there's real-time location verification from the app.

Like I said, don't panic. Help is out there, technology works, and good people like Christine still exist. With a little luck, you'll not only recover your phone but your faith in humanity will be completely restored! 🌱

SPECIAL FEATURE World Kindness Day: November 13

Editor's note:

Every November 13, the world observes World Kindness Day, a reminder of the simplest yet most powerful of virtues. A single act of kindness can start a ripple of change that can transform the lives of children, families and entire communities. We're shining a light on local initiatives by two unsung community heroes that not only embody kindness but also inspire kindness in others. And because great wisdom often comes from the youngest among us, we've gathered heartwarming insights from some community kids with big hearts.

Unsung Heroes

BY AMANDA VIRREY

We all try to make life better for others, whether by donating, volunteering, or simply lending a hand. But for two Boracay-based hoteliers and philanthropists, Ryan Alba and Lhodie Caldeo, these small acts of kindness grew into a deeper calling: serving communities in ways that also gave them joy and purpose.

Ryan chose to support farmers and indigenous peoples, while Lhodie championed artists and craftsmen across the country. Through simple but thoughtful initiatives, they built programs that not only sustain livelihoods but also empower communities to stand on their own, skilled, self-reliant, and ready to seize greater opportunities.

Former hotelier **Ryan Alba** founded **Buhay Bukid**, a community store that sells farm and meat products at lower prices while cutting out middlemen.

Through this initiative, he supports farmers from Libacao, Balusbos, Nabas, Pandan, Napaan, Tag-Osip, Ibajay, and Boracay, helping them increase the volume of production and earn more from their harvests. At the same time, locals and businesses gain access to affordable produce, strengthening livelihoods, and supporting Philippine agriculture as a whole.

Ultimately, greater demand for local produce encourages more farmers to cultivate their land, helping restore and sustain agriculture in Aklan for the benefit of the community and the environment.

Ryan encourages the community to support farmers who still struggle to earn a steady living. Through his **Adopt-a-Farm** program, created with Buhay Bukid and Malay Food System, people can invest in a farmer's plot or commission crops to be grown and delivered. The initiative guarantees quality produce at fair prices while boosting local agriculture and reducing carbon footprint.

Ryan also supports the Boracay Ati community through the **Ati Project**, which raises funds for education and provides training in basic hospitality skills. The program links Atis with island stakeholders for training and employment, and so far, two have joined Boracay Paradise Hotel and five are working with Buhay Bukid as shopkeepers, jam makers, and delivery staff. To date, two donors have pledged to finance the education of two Ati youth.

Buhay Bukid outlets are located near Aqua Boracay (Bulabog), across Hennan Park, in Diniwid and Caticlan. Ryan can be reached via mobile (+63 917) 314 3480 or email ryanalba2025@gmail.com.



Ryan Alba



Buhay Bukid's zero carbon delivery using a bamboo bike

Hue Hotel Resort Manager **Lhodie Caldeo** leads community livelihood programs that support local craftsmen and artists by giving them venues to showcase their work and by promoting their skills to clients.

She collaborates with weaving, crafting, and artisan groups across the country, including the Inyawan weavers of Antique, Kinaiya it Nabaoy of Malay, Napaan Bamboo Crafters, T'boli brass casters and weavers in South Cotabato, Inabel makers in Abra, bamboo and abaca artisans in Aklan and Bicol, espadrille makers in Liliw, and pottery artists in Sagada.

Through partnerships with groups like Philincon in Antique and Aklan Trekkers Inc., she helped rebrand these products under **DaloyPH**, making them available at outlets such as Localidad Shop in Station X, Mövenpick Boracay, Mandala Spa and Resort Villas, Hannah Hotel, and the monthly community market at Canvas Inn in Bulabog. Her role has since expanded into product development consulting and bridging artisans with island stakeholders.

Ryan and Lhodie's initiatives were not born from grand projects but from a simple desire to see others thrive. Their stories shows that change begins with pure intention to help others, and the means will follow.



Lhodie Caldeo proudly wears a locally crafted katcha shirt



DaloyPH at Localidad

Kindness Through the Eyes of Children

BY PAULINE REITZER

In Charlie Mackesy's *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*, a boy is asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" His answer is simple yet profound: "Kind." This gentle exchange captures something children often understand more naturally than adults—that kindness is not an achievement to reach for, but a way of being in the world.

When we ask children to define kindness, their responses are refreshingly honest, imaginative and grounded in everyday life. For them, kindness is not abstract. It is alive in actions, words and small gestures of care. Their perspectives remind us that even the simplest acts can hold the greatest meaning.

We asked a few Boracay children to answer a timeless question in their own words: **What is kindness?**

"Kindness is helping others and being generous. An example is offering a helping hand to someone who needs it." — Alia, 13

"Kindness is being nice to others and making them feel good. An example of kindness is sharing." — Sofiya, 12

"Kindness is helping someone when they need it. For example, listening to your friends when they need to talk about something." — Gaia, 11

"Kindness is love and family. I show it by hugging and kissing." — Lukas, 5

"Kindness is showing respect to everyone around you. Help the lolo and lola to cross the street and people who are in need without expecting a reward." — Jed, 11

"Kindness is helping people or doing something for them. It's caring about them and being there for them when they need you." — Ameliya, 8

"You have to be nice. An example is sharing toys with my friends and hugging." — Amira, 6

"Kindness is being nice and helpful." — Hugo, 6

"Kindness is being adorable and having a silly face." — Mila, 5

"Kindness is being gentle and generous to others. Being kind is showing respect and helping someone in need." — Hailey, 13

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Nabaoy River and the Price of Power

Green Energy or Greenwashing?

BY AZENITH RESURRECCION

“Tranquil and mesmerizing.” That’s how many describe the Nabaoy River, the fresh water source of Malay and the wondrous Boracay Island.

This quaint, meandering river is a favorite weekend retreat for island locals and a welcome escape from Boracay during the busy season. Just 20 minutes from the jetty port, it offers visitors a chance to enjoy a different natural wonder and savor the simple joys of life by the river.

The Nabaoy River, a small tributary of the Northwest Panay Peninsula Natural Park watershed, stretches 17 kilometers from its source to its mouth at the Sibuyan Sea.

Along its banks are small barrios and Malay communities whose livelihoods depend mainly on agriculture, fishing, farming and selling native produce.

River communities surrounding Nabaoy are a perfect picture of provincial living, yet Boracay’s modern comforts and lifestyle are just a short distance away.

My partner’s family lives in a small community in Barangay Motag, near Nabaoy River, which is why we often spend weekends by the river whenever my kids want. Like all other residents, before piped water reached their home, they fetched water daily from the *tuburan* or *bukal* for laundry, bathing, cleaning and cooking. I’m amazed that even today, the spring water here remains safe to drink unfiltered, just as it was in the old days.

Boracay Island enjoys some of the best quality water supply compared to other popular island and beach destinations in the country, thanks to the Nabaoy River. In a survey we conducted last year about the quality of life on the island, water supply ranked among the least of the residents’ concerns. The top concerns were the high cost of living and frequent power disruptions affecting business.

The hydropower plant, first proposed in 2014 to help supply the Visayas Grid’s renewable energy needs and ease power shortages during peak hours, has since been revived. In 2021, SMC Global Power Holdings (SMCGP), the power-generating arm of San Miguel Corporation, announced plans to build a 300-megawatt pumped-storage hydroelectric power plant worth ₱26.3 billion.

Hydroelectric power is a renewable energy source that generates electricity by harnessing the kinetic force of flowing water. This typically involves the construction of dams or water control structures that channel water through turbines to produce electricity. Among the country’s largest hydropower facilities are Kalayaan in Laguna (736 MW), San Roque in Pangasinan (435 MW), Magat

in Cagayan Valley (388 MW), Pantabangan-Masiway in Nueva Ecija (300.8 MW), and Pulangi IV in Bukidnon (255 MW).

Under Energy Regulation 1-94 of Republic Act 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA), host communities of hydropower projects receive one centavo per kilowatt-hour generated. Benefits include electrification funds, development and livelihood programs, reforestation and watershed management, as well as health and environmental enhancement projects.

San Roque Hydropower Inc. (SRHI), a subsidiary of SMC Global Power Holdings, outlined the advantages of the proposed Aklan Pumped-Storage Hydro Power Project in its presentation to Brgy. Nabaoy on December 16, 2024. These include local employment, business opportunities, tax revenues, and an additional power source for the Western Visayas Grid to support the integration of other renewables such as wind and solar.

The facility would function like a “giant battery,” storing and dispatching energy on demand to enhance grid stability and strengthen national energy security. Hydropower is also cited as a clean, reliable and cost-effective energy source, with efficiency rates of up to 90% compared to solar, wind and coal.

The proposal further states that under Republic Acts 9513 and 7160, the government is entitled to one percent of the project’s gross income from electricity sales. Of this, 60% will go to the National Government Share (NGS) and 40% to the Local Government Units Share (LGUS), divided as follows: 20% for the province, 45% for the municipality, and 35% for the barangay.

While hydropower is widely regarded as an abundant renewable energy source, research and scientific studies also point to potential drawbacks. In areas such as Nabaoy, experts warn that hydropower plants may do more harm than good.

According to the energy website Kiwienergy.us, the downsides include environmental impacts from dam construction, which can permanently disrupt river systems. Other risks cited are the displacement of local communities and cultures along riverbanks, risks of flooding,

and damage to the natural habitats of local flora and fauna.

A team of scientists led by Dr. Raymond Jacinto-Sugang, Senior Chemist-Scientist and Research Leader at the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute (PNRI), recently mapped the geology of Nabaoy River and its watershed. The study, *Hydrological Characterization of Boracay Island’s Groundwater System and Nabaoy River Watershed Using Isotope Techniques*, was shared with the Nabaoy Environmental Defenders (NED) for public use and information.

The team traced the river’s origins to two headwaters, Pangyaw



and Nagata, both situated within the Saboncogon Formation. These zones act as natural rainwater collectors, which explains why the river continues to flow even during dry spells.

By testing water samples through stable isotope analysis, the team confirmed that the river is primarily rain-fed. Through tritium dating, a technique similar to carbon dating but using hydrogen isotopes, the study revealed that Nabaoy’s water is, on average, 15 years old. In other words, drinking from the river today means sipping rainfall that fell more than a decade ago.

The researchers cautioned that underground turbine construction could fracture the unique rock formations that store and release water. Any disruption, scientists warned, could threaten the year-round flow that makes Nabaoy vital to both Boracay and mainland Malay.

During a public consultation on July 26, 2025, organized by San Roque Hydropower Incorporated (SRHI), villagers from six barangays along the Nabaoy River,

together with indigenous peoples (IPs) and environmental advocates, voiced firm opposition to the proposed hydropower project. The meeting formed part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process required by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Residents led by the Nabaoy Environmental Defenders (NED) held placards and banners, and used the open forum to directly reject the proposal.

The NED itself grew out of the community’s earlier fight against the Nabas Wind Power Project, particularly during its proposed Phase 2 expansion. With support from the Protect NPPNP Coalition, villagers

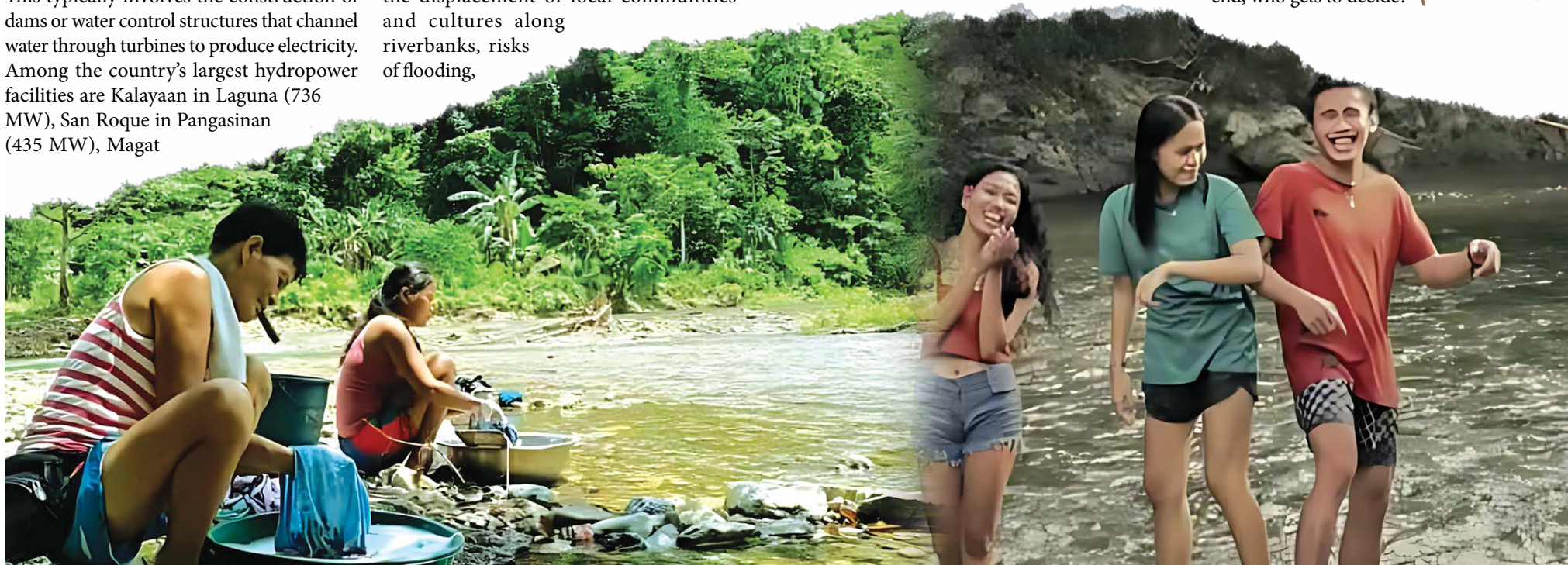
opposed the development, citing long-term damage from Phase 1, implemented more than a decade ago. The first phase left a legacy of soil erosion, siltation, and disrupted water sources, impacts still felt today. The resistance succeeded: Phase 2 was relocated away from the watershed.

“While this project is labeled as being of ‘national significance,’ we must also recognize that ecological reserves are the lifeblood of local communities and of the highest local value,” said Dr. Rebecca Tandug, Executive Director of PhiliCon, an NGO advocating for the Northwest Panay Peninsula Natural Park (NPPNP).

She warned against what she described as “false solutions” to the climate crisis. “While we support the global shift to renewable energy, we reject greenwashing in the name of just energy transition,” Tandug said. “Sustainable development means seeking solutions without trading off key biodiversity areas like the Northwest Panay Peninsula. With foresight and creativity, suitable areas for energy projects can be found, just not within the hotspots of community rivers farms and protected ecosystems.”

A petition is now circulating to “Save Nabaoy Watershed, Boracay’s main water source: STOP THE PROPOSED DAM PROJECT,” at this link: bit.ly/savenabaoywatershed.

A hydropower plant may be seen as vital infrastructure for a developing municipality like Malay. But when economic progress depends largely on tourism, putting at risk a unique river system and the forests that sustain it could be a situational irony that ends in environmental catastrophe. In the end, who gets to decide? 🌿



ESSAYS

Life by the River: Why Nabaoyons Fight for their Watershed

BY CRIS CAHILIG | *Nabaoy resident*

At dawn, you'll see some men collecting their bamboo traps that they strategically placed along the riverbanks the day before to catch fresh crabs, shrimps and fish. By 8 a.m., you'll see mothers doing laundry by the river, some men transporting their freshly cut bamboo trees they harvested upstream, and some days, you'll see some Atis doing their own thing away from the locals.

The river is generally quiet in the daytime. All you can hear is the relaxing flow of water, coupled with birds singing in the background, and maybe a few laughs here and there from people talking about their humble lives. On weekends, however, the whole stretch animatedly transforms into a vibrant sight. You'll see kids playing and swimming and laughing, and teenagers singing videoke in nearby resorts.

In Nabaoy, you will see how local life is—simple, peaceful, and grounded. You'll see how the river feeds them, sustains them, and anchors their way of living.



The Blooms Publication

We came across Tatay Vencio, a 72-year-old local who has been catching fresh produce from the river since he was seven years old. He told us about “patuyaw” (freshwater shrimps), “Katang” (freshwater crabs), “Ngadlaw” and “banag” (both freshwater shellfish). “These freshwater produce were very abundant before the resorts came. Most of them were also larger than what is caught nowadays. When the river slowly gained traction from tourism, freshwater produce started to decline considerably,”

he said. We asked him if he knew about the proposed hydropower plant project and he said yes after a loud sigh. His face suddenly shifted to worry and sadness. He told us in his own dialect, “We don't want any project here, too risky for nature. The river is our

treasure provided by God to us; we are not owners but only caretakers, so we must protect it for future generations.”

San Miguel Corporation (SMC) is back in proposing a 300-Megawatt Hydro Power Plant in the Nabaoy Watershed. The plan includes building two massive storage dams covering 116.33 hectares or 287.46 acres. Much of this area falls within the Northwest Panay Peninsula Natural Park or NPPNP, a protected forest that shelters endemic endangered flora and fauna and is among the last low-lying tropical rainforests in the Philippines. The area is also claimed as part of the ancestral domain by the Malay Ati, the indigenous community that has lived and cared for these areas for generations.

This is not the first time SMC has come knocking. Back in 2021, the company sought the community's approval as part of the environmental impact assessment required by the DENR. The people said no. Four years later, on July 26, 2025, SMC returned to Nabaoy Plaza to present the same project. The answer, once again, was a clear and unwavering “No dams in our watershed.”

For locals, the issue is simple. “Why should the only water source that sustains Boracay and the whole of Malay be risked for corporate energy gain?” asks SB member Hope Christine Pagsuguiron. Nabaoyons were saying the same thing: “We are not against renewable energy or developments. We don't want the dam in Nabaoy; it is too risky. People are not owners, but caretakers of the land and rivers. We must protect it for future generations.”



Cris Cahilig

Kapag nasira ang kalikasan, tayo rin ang mahihirapan

BY HECTOR JONES VICENTE

Nabaoy resident and musician whose family owns a picnic area by the river

Kapag sinira natin ang ilog at gubat para sa pansamantalang pakinabang, sinisira rin natin ang kinabukasan ng ating mga anak.”

Ang aming Nabaoy River ay kilala bilang

napakalinis at napakagandang ilog sa bayan ng Malay. Ngayon, may balak na magpatayo ng dam dito at ang dahilan daw ay para mas marami tayong supply ng kuryente. Sa una, parang maganda ito kasi makakatulong sa mas maraming tao. Pero kung iisiping mabuti, mas malaki ang kasiraan kaysa sa pakinabang.

Hindi ako sang-ayon sa proyektong ito.

Pinaka ayaw ko sa lahat ay sisirain nito ang kalikasan. Magiging maputik ang daloy ng tubig dahilang upang maapektuhan at mamatay ang mga isda at iba pang yamang naninirahan sa ilog tulad ng mga patuyaw. Mawawalan ang mga nakatira dito ng malinis na tubig, pang-araw-araw na pang kain at source of income. Maaari ding magdulot ito ng malaking problema

tulad ng pag lakas ng baha.

Para sa akin, ang pagtayo ng dam ay hindi magandang solusyon at mas mabuti kung maghanap ng ibang paraan para makakuha ng supply ng kuryente. Huwag dito sa amin, huwag sa napaka ganda at sagana naming bukid at ilog! Kapag nasira ang kalikasan, tayo rin ang mahihirapan.

Nabaoy River: Our Home, Our Life

BY GTS | *Nabaoy resident for 15 years, breadwinner of a family of 4*

We live in Nabaoy, right by the river and the road. We are excited about development. Seeing Malay grow into a city makes us hopeful.

But if progress comes at the cost of destroying the Nabaoy River, we will not accept it. The river gives us our livelihood, our home and our daily memories. We would rather keep our simple life, together with the river that sustains us.

The Nabaoy River is the main source of clean water for Mainland Malay and Boracay. It is also important for tourism and ecotourism in the region. According to the study by Dr. Raymond Suggang of the DOST, the Nabaoy Watershed is part of the Western Panay Peninsula and is critical for water supply and environmental health. Any changes to the river could affect thousands of people and the tourism industry.

The proposed SMC hydropower project could alter the river's flow and damage the environment. It poses risks of flooding, loss of biodiversity, and impacts on the

livelihoods of those who rely on fishing, farming and tourism.

We are not against progress, but we ask that our voices be heard. The Nabaoy River is our life. It should never be traded for development. It is for us and for future generations.

Boracay Sun News remains committed to presenting all sides. The writer reached out to San Miguel Corporation through Engr. Mauricio C. Loria, Jr. via SMS and email to clarify community concerns but received no reply as of press time. Information in this article is accurate as of publication.



SPORTS

Strong Finish for Boracay Paddlers at Iloilo River Dragon Boat Festival

BY AMANDA VIRREY

Boracay’s dragon boat paddlers victoriously took over the waters of Iloilo at the recently concluded 2nd Iloilo River Dragon Boat Festival 2025.



The women of Boracay DragonForce celebrate their 1st place win at the recent Iloilo River Dragon Boat Festival

John Nina Andrade

From September 5-8, Boracay’s homegrown teams, the **Boracay DragonForce**, **Boracay AllStars** and the newly formed **Dagyab Dragons** delivered high-intensity performances, fueled by the island’s passion and dedication for dragon boating. They competed among 20 teams from Manila, Negros Oriental, Davao, Dumaguete, and Iloilo.

Following two months of daily training in Bulabog, the three island teams earned top seeds in every heat of the 200-meter racecourses, advancing to the finals in

all categories: Senior Mixed Small Boat, Premier Mixed Standard Boat, Premier Women’s Small Boat, and Premier Open Standard Boat.

The mixed representatives of Boracay DragonForce and Boracay AllStars proved unstoppable, clocking the fastest times from the preliminaries to the finals. The Boracay AllStars bagged 1st place, while the Boracay DragonForce secured 3rd place in the Senior Mixed Small Boat, with the Iloilo Paddlers Club-OG emerging as champions. In the Premier Mixed Standard Boat, the Boracay AllStars finished 3rd, while the top prize went to the



The silver medal winning heat of the Boracay DragonForce women’s boat

Philippine Navy Dragon Boat Team.

On the final day, Boracay DragonForce and AllStars were joined by the Dagyab Dragons, an all-male squad of veterans and newcomers formed to compete in the Premier Open Standard Boat race. Also lined up was the Premier Women’s Small Boat, where Boracay DragonForce’s women paddlers secured a spot in the finals against the formidable Navy team.

For the male paddlers, the challenge was tougher, enduring unprecedented elimination rounds in the semis. Despite this, both the Boracay AllStars and Dagyab Dragons pushed through to the finals.

The finals proved the most thrilling and toughest races. In the Premier Women’s Small Boat, Boracay DragonForce finished 1st place, ahead of two other teams, but still four seconds behind the champion Navy team. In the Premier Open Standard Boat, the Dagyab Dragons placed 2nd, followed by the Boracay AllStars in 3rd.

The Navy’s dominance came as no surprise. Alongside the PNP and the Philippine Dragon Boat Team, they belong to the country’s elite dragon boating leagues, with unmatched training regimens and records of podium finishes. Unlike these professional squads, Boracay paddlers balance family, work and school with limited practice, making their results in Iloilo all the more remarkable.

Yet beyond the medals, the event revealed the true spirit of the sport: fluidity, strength, synchronicity, and camaraderie.

The Boracay teams expressed deep gratitude to their young paddlers, who juggle school schedules with daily training. Their passion and drive not only uplift Boracay’s presence in national competitions but also point to a future where the island’s athletes can shine even brighter, perhaps even on international waters.

Like other young athletes who represent the island, they too deserve support as they carry Boracay’s name in dragon boat races nationwide, and potentially, abroad.

Special thanks to the Municipal Mayor of Malay, Hon. Frolibar S. Bautista, for his generous support! 🌿

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INDULGE

Top 7 Heavenly Desserts

BY GENE LOVES ACOSTA

1. Aria Gelato

You can't miss Aria Gelato, right next to Aria Cucina Italiana at D'Mall, with its constant line of customers. They've maintained a strong following over the years for their authentic Italian gelato. Serving freshly made cold treats daily, they have been using imported ingredients from Italy since 2011. You could have one to three scoops of various flavors like Espresso Gelato and Bubble Gum Rosa in a cup or waffle cone. They also have whimsically shaped pre-made popsicles you can choose from. Got room for big scoops? The Banana Boat is a next-level banana split, while Tartufo De Luxe is a gelato cake dipped in liquid chocolate and garnished with nuts and berries, finished with whipped cream, a drizzle of caramel, and (you guessed it) a cherry on top.



2. Café del Sol's Tiramisu

Right at the entrance of D'Mall, Café del Sol has been around long enough to be considered an island fixture. People drop by for smoothies, iced coffee, or simply to cool off. But the sleeper hit? Their Tiramisu. It's not flashy. Just soft mascarpone layers, coffee-soaked sponge and a dusting of cocoa that somehow tastes better when you're barefoot and salty from the beach. It's rich without weighing you down, the kind of balance that's kept it on the menu all these years.



3. Coco Mama, Mango Mama, Ube Mama

No Boracay itinerary feels complete without meeting the "Mamas." The original Coco Mama, began in D'Mall and quickly became an island staple. It serves dairy-free coconut ice cream that's creamy and not too sweet, scooped into a coconut shell. Add sticky rice, *pinipig* and fresh mango cubes and you get something light, tropical and exactly what you want when the sun is at its fiercest. Then came the sisters. Mango Mama piles golden mango soft-serve into cups with playful toppings, a sunny nod to the fruit the island is obsessed with. Ube Mama takes the country's beloved purple yam and turns it into a creamy, photo-ready treat that feels both nostalgic and indulgent.



4. Epic Boracay's Bread & Butter Pudding

Epic Boracay is one of those spots where you end up staying longer than planned, with its beachfront view and lively energy right on White Beach. Order the Bread & Butter Pudding and it matches the mood: warm, comforting and just indulgent enough. The bread is soft and custardy in the middle, golden on the edges, with rum raisins tucked in for a little kick. A scoop of artisanal vanilla ice cream melts into the pudding while the salted caramel ties everything together. Sweet, creamy, and best enjoyed with the sound of the waves in the background.



Days in Boracay almost write their own script: swim, stroll, eat, repeat. And somewhere in between, dessert always finds its way in. From café classics to beachside scoops, the island knows how to satisfy a sweet tooth. Here are the top seven that locals swear by, in alphabetical order.

5. Ice Flakes' Shaved Snow Ice

Their snow ice is made from 100% real fruit, shaved so fine it melts as soon as it hits your tongue. The Mango Coconut is the runaway favorite: creamy fruit-based ice drizzled with condensed milk, topped with fresh mango cubes and finished with a mint leaf. It looks tropical, tastes refreshing, and somehow feels light even when you finish the whole thing yourself. The Halo-Halo version has all the familiar mix-ins without weighing you down, while Durian brings a bold hit for those who like stronger flavors. Servings are generous, the colors pop for photos, and sitting down with one inside the air-conditioned nook at D'Mall is a sweet break from the beach. If you spot a line, don't worry. It moves fast, and the payoff is worth it.



6. Jeepney Stop's Halo-Halo

Few things say "Philippine summer" like halo-halo, and Jeepney Stop makes one that feels both classic and celebratory. Their version doesn't skimp with a glass layered with shaved ice, leche flan, sweetened bananas, *ube halaya*, and other colorful mix-ins that peek through like confetti. It's finished with a swirl of milk, a scoop of ice cream, and that satisfying crunch when you first dig your spoon all the way down. What makes it special in Boracay is the setting. The café itself is a tribute to Pinoy culture.



7. Lemoni Cafe's Carrot Cake with Cream Cheese

If you like carrot cake that doesn't leave you bouncing off a sugar high, Lemoni's version hits the spot. The cake is moist without being soggy, with just enough carrot texture. The spice is gentle with a hint of cinnamon, maybe a touch of nutmeg, just enough to warm without taking over. The frosting comes on thick, the way cream cheese should, creamy and tangy enough to cut through the sweetness of the cake. Pair it with their iced latte or a pot of tea and you'll see why it's been a steady favorite. And steady really is the word because Lemoni just marked its 20th year, proof that this cake has staying power! 🌿



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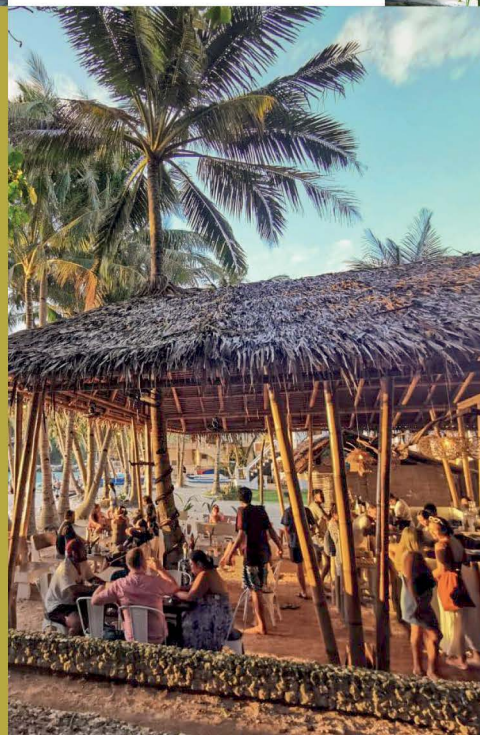
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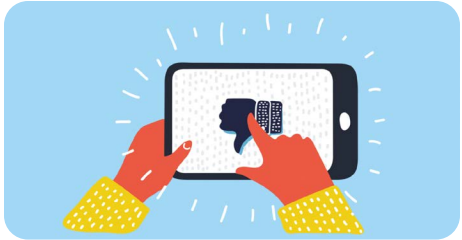


MIND YOUR MANNERS
A friendly reminder to practice
common courtesy and decency.

How to Handle Negative Reviews

BY RICA VELASCO

For hotels, resorts, cafés and especially for small businesses, negative reviews can be devastating. One harsh comment online can overshadow years of hard work. But there are ways to handle these moments with grace, clarity and dignity.



Search Engine Journal

First, don't panic. What matters most is how you respond. **Start with speed and sincerity.** Respond as soon as possible, ideally within 24 to 48 hours. Thank the reviewer for the feedback, even if it stings. Keep your tone warm and

professional. This shows guests and future readers that you are paying attention and that you care. **Acknowledge the concern directly.** Do not make vague apologies. If someone mentioned that their room was not clean or the food was cold, say so. "We are truly sorry that housekeeping fell short during your stay. That is not the standard we aim for." Acknowledging details shows you are listening. **Offer solutions, not excuses.** If you have taken steps to address the issue, say so. "We've since retrained our kitchen staff and implemented new checks before service." Concrete actions go a long way toward rebuilding trust. **Take the conversation offline.** Provide a number or email so the guest can speak directly to the management. "Please feel free to contact me at manager@yourhotel.com. We'd love the chance to make this right." This helps avoid a public back-and-forth

and gives you a chance to personally turn things around. **Stay calm, even if the review is unfair.** Resist the urge to argue. Do not accuse the guest of lying, even if you suspect exaggeration. The way you respond will speak louder than their original post. **Flag fake or abusive reviews.** If a review is clearly from someone who never stayed at your property, or contains offensive language, report it. Most review sites have processes for this but keep your public response neutral while it is being handled. **Encourage the good.** Ask happy guests (especially repeat ones) to leave reviews. A healthy stream of honest, positive feedback will help balance out the occasional bad one. People read patterns more than they read one-star rants. **Learn from what is repeated.** If you notice a recurring theme in your reviews such as slow check-ins, poor Wi-Fi, or inconsistent service, treat it as useful

feedback. Small changes can prevent future complaints. **Finally, respond with heart.** When faced with a negative review, it is easy to feel defensive or discouraged. But a calm, respectful response that acknowledges the feedback, offers context, and invites further conversation can go a long way. It shows professionalism, humility and a genuine desire to improve. For small, local businesses, that kind of grace under pressure reminds everyone that hospitality at its core is still about kindness. We all love to support local, until it is time to forgive local. The truth is that these small businesses are the soul of our destinations. They do not have PR teams or crisis managers, but they have heart. Let's bring back a little humanity to the digital space because in the end, we are not just managing businesses, we're nurturing relationships. 🌱

HEALTH & WELLNESS Mental Health in the Workplace

BY FREIDA DARIO-SANTIAGO

Every year on October 10, the world marks World Mental Health Awareness Day, a reminder of the importance of protecting and promoting mental wellbeing. It serves as a platform to break mental health stigma, encourage open discussions, and advocate for better mental health support and resources.

In the Philippines, the entire month of October marks Mental Health Awareness Month, whereas the second week of October is specifically declared as National Mental Health Week. These events are crucial for spotlighting mental health-related issues and combating associated stigmas. Some people light candles in

remembrance, while others host public forums, charity walks, or art exhibitions centered on lived experience. Many social media platforms are filled with green ribbons that symbolize mental health awareness, as individuals share stories and encouragement using hashtags like #WorldMentalHealthDay.

This year's theme, "Mental Health in the Workplace," is a call to action that speaks to millions of people who spend the majority of their waking hours at work, and highlights how any work setting can directly affect mental health. Whether in an office, hospital, school, factory, or home environment, the workplace has a powerful impact on our emotional wellbeing. With long hours, high expectations and constant demands, employees often face stress, burnout and anxiety. A supportive workplace culture where mental health is openly discussed and resources are accessible can make a crucial difference. Employers are encouraged to implement policies that prioritize work-life balance, provide mental health services, and foster an environment of respect and empathy.

Importance of Mental Health in the Workplace

The significance of mental health at work cannot be overstated. It is a critical component of employee wellbeing and organizational success. According to the National Fund for Workforce Solutions (www.nationalfund.org), mental health issues are a leading cause of absenteeism, with the World Health Organization estimating that depression and anxiety alone result in 12 billion working days lost each year, costing the global economy US\$1 trillion annually in lost productivity.

Risks to Mental Health at Work

Work-related factors that can significantly impact mental health include:

- Poor working conditions:** Inflexible hours, high workloads, short-staffing



- and lack of resources.
- Toxic workplace culture:** Bullying, harassment, discrimination and lack of support.
 - Job insecurity:** Lack of control over one's work, limited growth opportunities, and job uncertainty.
 - Work-life imbalance:** Unclear boundaries between work and personal life, especially with remote work.

On the other hand, a supportive mental health environment in the workplace can lead to:

- Increased productivity
- Reduced absenteeism.
- Improved employee morale
- Enhanced job satisfaction

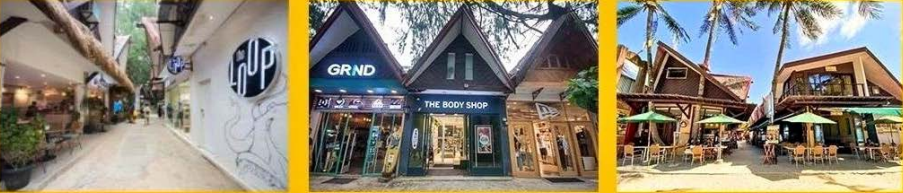
Philippine labor laws support mental health

The Philippine government supports mental health through laws like Republic Act 11036 and mandates by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), including DOLE Advisory No. 19, s. 2023, which requires employers to provide access to mental health and self-care services. Employers are expected to provide access to resources such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) such as confidential counseling, referrals to mental health professionals, and crisis hotlines. Most importantly, employers must create a work environment where employees feel secure, supported and psychologically safe to perform at their best. By addressing mental health in the workplace, companies not only improve productivity but also show genuine care for their people. This World Mental Health Awareness Day, the call is clear: healthier minds create healthier, more resilient communities. 🌱



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HEALTH & WELLNESS

Whole Foods: The foundation of a healthy diet

BY JULIANNA PATRICIA VARGA



Masahiro Ihara/Creative Commons

In today's fast-paced world, convenience often wins over nutrition. Ultra-processed snacks, sugary drinks, and ready-made meals are quick fixes, but they rarely provide what our bodies need. Whole foods, on the other hand, offer a simple, time-tested path to better health.

Whole foods are ingredients in their most natural state (or as close to it as possible), without excessive processing, additives or artificial flavoring. Think fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, whole grains,

nuts, seeds, and legumes. These foods are naturally rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber that support everything from digestion to heart health.

Many popular diets praised for their health benefits, such as the Mediterranean, plant-based, or paleo-style approaches, share one feature: a focus on whole foods. Whether it's vegetables, legumes, and olive oil in the Mediterranean diet or the abundance of

produce and grains in plant-based eating, these approaches work in part because they limit highly processed foods and emphasize nutrient density.

Why whole foods work for weight loss

Weight loss and weight gain are a simple numbers game: calories in versus calories out. While factors like age, sleep and stress can make the process easier or harder, it ultimately comes down to energy balance.

Thanks to their fiber content, whole foods are more filling. A bowl of lentil or *munggo* soup, a fresh salad with chickpeas and nuts, or chia pudding with fruit is more likely to satisfy than a processed snack with the same calories. This simply means that compared to processed options, you can eat a larger volume of whole foods for fewer calories, leading to reduced intake without extreme restriction. This is why whole foods-based diets often deliver steady, sustainable results.

More than just weight loss

While whole foods can support a healthy weight, their benefits go far beyond the scale. They aid digestion, heart health, vitality, steady energy, a healthy microbiome, and more.

Rich in fiber, whole foods help regulate blood sugar and cholesterol. Soluble fiber forms a gel-like substance in the gut that slows digestion and glucose release, preventing blood sugar spikes. This gel also traps cholesterol, flushing it out during digestion and promoting heart health. Foods high in soluble fiber include oats, legumes, and nuts.

Fiber also supports gut health, feeding

beneficial bacteria that boost immunity and even influence mood. Alongside fiber, whole foods provide healthy fats like those in avocados, nuts, olive oil, and fatty fish that help regulate or reduce inflammation.

Packed with vitamins and minerals, whole foods meet micronutrient needs while offering a delicious and nutritious way to prioritize health!

Making whole foods work for you

Incorporating more whole foods into your diet doesn't mean you have to follow a strict plan or cut out every processed item overnight. Small, sustainable steps add up. You could start by:

- Adding an extra serving of vegetables to lunch and dinner.
- Choosing nuts or fruit over packaged snacks.
- Cooking more meals at home using fresh ingredients.
- Swapping refined grains (white bread, pasta) for whole-grain versions.

Over time, your palate adjusts and these foods become your preference rather than a "health obligation." 🌱

Mediterranean Chickpea Salad

A fresh Mediterranean-inspired salad that's fiber-rich and nutrient-dense, it will keep you full for hours, proof that healthy eating can be simple and delicious. Serves 2-3

Ingredients

2 cups cooked garbanzos, rinsed and drained

1 cucumber, diced
1 red bell pepper, diced
1 cup ripe tomatoes, halved
1/4 cup red onion, finely sliced
1/4 cup wansoy or kinchay, chopped
2-3 tbsps olive oil
3 tbsps calamansi juice
1/2 tsp dried oregano or thyme (optional)
Salt and pepper

Procedure

1. In a bowl, combine chickpeas, cucumber, bell pepper, tomatoes, onion, and wansoy/kinchay.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, calamansi juice, herbs, salt and pepper; pour over salad.
3. Toss gently and serve, or chill for 30 minutes to blend flavors.



CHIT CHAT BSN chit chats with some of the community's pillars and the folks you all want to get to know a little better.

Mellicent "Ice" Delos Santos-Tolentino: A Full-Blooded Aklanon Leading the Philippine Red Cross in Boracay

BY FREIDA DARIO-SANTIAGO



Ice Tolentino at the Malay Pagpahaega Service Awards

A full-blooded Aklanon from New Washington, Mellicent "Ice" Tolentino moved to Boracay Island in February this year and became officer-in-charge of the Philippine Red Cross-Boracay Malay Chapter (PRC-BMC) in April. A Marine Biology graduate, she has long been immersed in community livelihood programs—an experience that now proves essential in her humanitarian work.

What led you to the Philippine Red Cross?

My journey with the Philippine Red Cross began unexpectedly. At that time, my employment with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) was on hold. Then, I learned that PRC needed

an enumerator. Having done side jobs as an enumerator before I said yes without hesitation.

Coincidentally, on the very day PRC hired me, BFAR also called to say my employment would resume. Choosing PRC meant career growth. Learning I would be part of the Typhoon Haiyan operations, I chose PRC. While I spent years in the National Headquarters and implementing projects in NCR and Mindanao (Bukidnon, Marawi, Cotabato-Maguindanao, and Zamboanga), I always carried a silent prayer that one day, I could extend the same kind of support and service to my hometown.

What is the Chapter's focus and vision?

The PRC-BMC's flagship programs are First Aid Training and Lifeguarding, which sustain essential services such as Blood Services, Health, Disaster Management, Volunteer Service, Red Cross Youth, and Welfare. Another vital source of funding is the Million Volunteer Fund Drive, particularly the membership program.

My long-term goal is to build a pool of well-trained first aiders and lifeguards who can sustain our RC 143 Chapter and community volunteers while producing quality youth leaders. I envision a Malay community that actively participates in our programs and grows into a resilient and empowered community. Ultimately, I want residents, partner stakeholders, and even

tourists to feel assured that when they see PRC-BMC, they know they are safe.

What role do the Red Cross Youth play and how does the Chapter support them?

The Red Cross Youth in Malay provide strong support in mobilizing activities, such as manning first aid stations, conducting lecture-demonstrations, spreading information, and responding during emergencies. Through this, they learn the essence of being a humanitarian worker: serving the community not for recognition or applause, but simply to help. Public exposure also helps them build confidence, discover their potential and develop valuable skills.

How can the community help your humanitarian efforts?

We continue to seek support from the community, schools, and businesses through donations and our membership program, the SAFE Card.

Your proudest moment?

To be awarded as the Most Active Civil Society Organization during the Pagpahaega is a recognition of the collective efforts of our staff, RC 143 volunteers, Red Cross Youth, and the unwavering support of our Board of Directors.

What do you love most about island life?

When things get overwhelming, taking a stroll on the beach and watching the sunset

is therapeutic. Taking a nap by the shore has become a habit since I arrived here. Weekends with family and friends keep me grounded and refreshed.

What is your message to the Boracay community?

To our local leaders: let us work together toward a better, more peaceful, and resilient community, one that values the trust of stakeholders and safeguards the safety and integrity of our tourism industry.

And to the youth of Boracay: the Chapter is calling YOU! You have so much potential and a bright future to share with the most vulnerable. *Tara na at mag-volunteer!* 🌱



Jerome Patriarca, Nieve Patriarca, Chairman Delnora Nano and OIC Mellicent Tolentino at PRC's 34th Biennial National Convention

Editor's note:

Did you know the Philippines has an **Animal Welfare Act (RA 8485)** that protects animals and regulates facilities for their care, breeding, and training? October is **Animal Welfare Month**, with the first week declared **Animal Welfare Week** (Proclamation No. 715, 2004) to promote kindness, justice, and the proper care of all animals among the Filipino people. Activities include pet blessings, shows, and dog adventures, with many churches worldwide blessing animals on the Sunday closest to October 4.

Island Tails

Stories of happy endings for Boracay's homeless furry locals

BY GENE LOVES ACOSTA

October is Animal Welfare Month, and while there's still more work to do, some happy endings are already unfolding right here on the island. In Boracay, a few once-hungry wanderers have traded street smarts for soft beds and forever homes. You'll spot them snoozing under café tables, hanging out by shop counters, or stretching lazily on the sand.

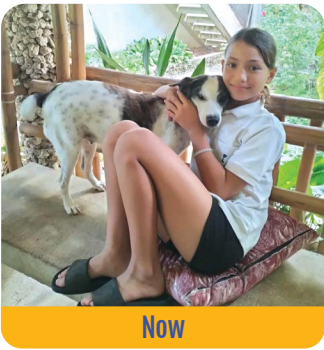
Thanks to kind-hearted cafés, resorts, and a community that cares, these dogs and cats who were once overlooked now have families who adore them. After all, what's paradise without a furry friend to share it with?

Oreo

When Oreo first showed up at the shelter, she was a mess. She was pregnant, limping on a broken leg and covered in scars. Not exactly the kind of dog most people would pick, but **Pauline Reitzer** and her daughters did and that made all the difference. At first, Oreo lingered by the gate, unsure if she truly belonged, until love and patience coaxed her inside. Nine months later, she's completely transformed: playful, affectionate and famous for shaking her butt like a little dancer every time she says hi.



Then



Now

Alon

Alon was once the pup nobody wanted. He was the tiniest of the litter, unfairly called "ugly" and about to be discarded. **Lhodie Caldeo** couldn't let that happen, so she took him in. He was so small he could have fit inside a plastic bag, shivering in her arms. That fragile runt has since grown into the sweetest and most loyal shadow, always by Lhodie's side as if afraid someone might take her away.



Then



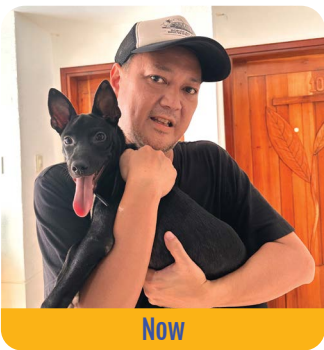
Now

Soul

Tiny, frail and covered in mange, Soul collapsed in front of **Café Got Soul Boracay**, too weak to carry on. A kind guest and the café's team rushed to help, offering food, medicine and a vet's care. In the care of **Will Villaroman** and **Casa Mezcaleria** team's care, within weeks he slowly grew stronger. His fur became soft again, his tail began to wag, and his eyes finally held the spark of the dog he was meant to be.



Then



Now

Tuna and Beans

Beans was rescued in Hagdan, while Tuna was found in Angol Plaza. Neither kitten knew where their next meal would come from, but both were lucky enough to be scooped up and fostered with care. Once introduced, they quickly became inseparable and found comfort in each other's company. Then **La Carmela de Boracay** saw their photos snuggled up and decided, why adopt one when you can have two? Now, Tuna and Beans are living their best island life together, loved twice as much.



Then



Now

Pua, Rescue Pup-Turned-Celebrity Endorser

BY FREIDA DARIO-SANTIAGO

A new four-legged team member is spreading warmth as the resident greeter at Belmont Hotel Boracay, and is putting a face to the hotel's pet-friendly initiative, PAWsome Adventures.

The hotel adopted Pua, a rescue dog from the island's Animal Adoption Rescue Center in November 2024, to boost workplace morale and bring joy to both employees and guests. "Pua has already become a beloved member of our team, and our associates enjoyed their special time with her," said Maia Israel, general manager for Boracay Newcoast's Belmont Hotel and Savoy Hotel.



Belmont Hotel

As the star of Belmont's new PAWsome Adventures campaign, Pua promotes pet-friendly travel. The program includes overnight stays starting at Php5,200, with perks such as pet beds, bowls, towels, litter boxes for cats, and even a VIP pet ID card upon check-in.

"We believe that vacations are best enjoyed with every member of the family, including our beloved pets," Israel adds.

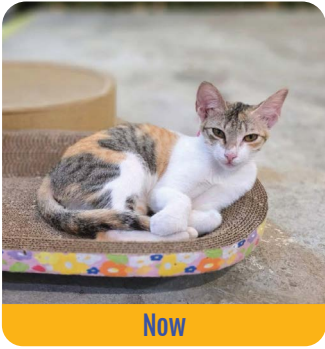
Belmont Café now offers a special menu for pets, featuring cakes and a Doggo Lasagna, available daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. 🌿

Ampon

Once a tiny calico kitten crying outside a gate, Ampon was brought to **GMarket Boracay**, where Mama Ming, a rescued cat who had just given birth, took her in as if she were her own. With milk to drink and siblings to snuggle with, she grew stronger each day and learned the safety of family. Now, Ampon is not only healthy but also friendly with everyone she meets.



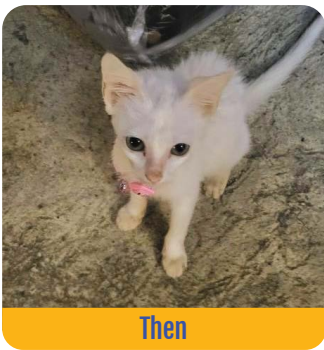
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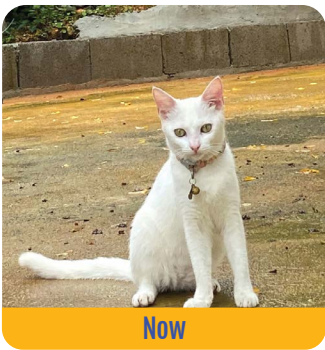
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Lucy

On New Year's Day 2023 in Balabag, a tiny kitten sat quietly by the church, so skinny and fragile, barely a month old, and looking lost in the big world around her. She was taken in by **Cris Fernandez**, who was touched by her quiet nature and the soft, almost whispered sound of her meow. Today, Lucy is a mom, and together with her little ones—all spayed and neutered—she greets each New Year not with fear, but with full bellies and gentle hands to hold them.



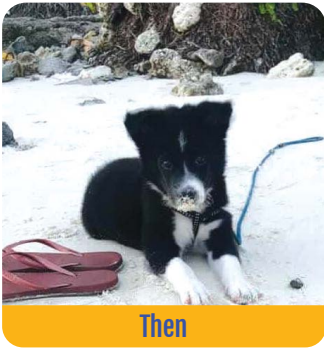
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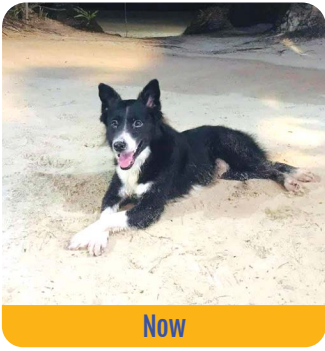
Now

Habagat

Habagat came into **Riza Rublica's** life after the heartbreaking loss of another pup, and at first, he was meant to be cared for only temporarily. Named Habagat because he was born during Typhoon Rolly, he stayed with Riza through the quiet days of lockdown. When Riza's friend finally came to take him back, she realized she could no longer let him go. Now, Habagat is right where he belongs, surrounded by love and home for good.



Then



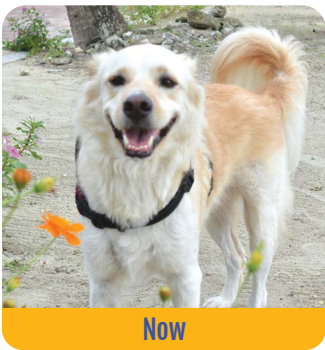
Now

Khao Soi

In August 2017, **Koy and Grace** heard that some drunks were after a litter of puppies in Bulabog, planning to sell them off. They rushed to the site and found five tiny pups shivering under a pile of wood and G.I. sheets, muddy and abandoned, and brought them home before it was too late. While his siblings dug right into the food, one pup pressed against Koy's ankles, kissing them and looking up as if to say, "I'm yours." From that moment, he became family. His siblings later found good homes of their own.



Then



Now

Val, the Angol Mayor

BY PAULINE REITZER

If Boracay had a canine celebrity hall of fame, Valentino, affectionately called Val, would already have his paw prints stamped in the sand. A four-year-old Aspin with short legs, a sun-kissed coat and a perfect “beach body,” Val has built a reputation as the undisputed Mayor of Angol.

With eyes that could make tourists drop their mango shakes, Val has a magnetism

that’s hard to ignore. Don’t be fooled, though, he’s no easy boy. Val comes and goes on his own terms, gracing you with his presence only if he deems you worthy. That said, once you’ve earned his nod, you’re part of his island crew.

Val never misses the big island moments: sunsets, ultimate frisbee trainings, morning joggers. He’s always there, surveying his kingdom with calm authority. When strangers or strays wander into Angol uninvited, Val makes sure they know whose territory they’ve stepped into. Behind him, his loyal entourage of female admirers follow closely, vying for his attention and basking in his natural charisma. Everrich’s female dogs are his number one fans, though it’s safe to say the whole neighborhood knows his name.



Sometimes, Val accompanies his favorite humans on long walks to Bulabog, trotting along like the island’s most eligible bachelor. But mostly, he enjoys his independence, embodying the spirit of Boracay: free, wild and self-assured.

So, if you spot him, remember: you’re in the presence of Boracay royalty. Long live Mayor Val, Angol’s most handsome beach boy! 🌿

If you believe in giving animals a chance at a better life and are looking to adopt, sponsor, or volunteer your time, contact the **Boracay Animal Adoption and Rescue Center (BAARC)**.
Facebook: /boracayaarc
IG: @baarcboracay

FUN FACTS

Let’s Hear it for the Mamas

Three masterful desserts brimming with Filipino pride

BY FREIDA DARIO-SANTIAGO



A great meal always ends with a satisfying dessert (“Top 7 Heavenly Desserts” on page 13), usually something cold and refreshing or warm and comforting, sweet, salty, chewy or crunchy. But what if you can have it all, homegrown, house-made, vegan-friendly and conscientiously packaged?

We dissected what are considered some of the best island desserts, to find out what it takes to make a winner, and we found out that just like the generous Filipino spirit, each ingredient—carefully curated and mindfully and conscientiously sourced, shines as a hero on its own merits, but humbly plays a pivotal supporting role to let the true stars shine—the humble Philippine fruits: the coconut and the mango.

Made in Boracay: Coco Mama, Mango Mama and Ube Mama

When in Boracay, nothing beats Coco Mama’s iconic coconut and pandan ice cream served in a coconut shell with strips of fresh buko, ripe golden mango cubes—both sourced in nearby Panay Island, heirloom sticky rice from a farmer’s cooperative in Banaue, and a sprinkle of Laguna pinipig.

Dubbed “the best island dessert” by Esquire Philippines, Coco Mama which was born almost 10 years ago, has since grown into a family of inventive desserts, with the addition of Mango Mama and Ube Mama, all showcasing the Philippines’ most beloved ingredients.

But these are not just desserts. They are delicious lessons in history, heritage and Filipino ingenuity. Each spoonful tells the story of the land and the farmers who nurture it.

Coconut: The Tree of Life 🌿

Known as the “tree of life,” the coconut sustains nearly a third of the world’s population. In the Philippines, it is farmed across 69 provinces, employs 2.5 million farmers, and covers



3.62 million hectares. The country remains a top exporter of coconut oil and desiccated coconut.

“Every part of the coconut has a purpose: food, medicine, shelter,” explains the Philippine Coconut Authority. It’s no wonder Coco Mama highlights it as the star.

At Coco Mama, the coconut is transformed into creamy, plant-based ice cream served sustainably in its own shell.

Mango: Sweetest in the World

Did you know that Philippine mangoes are officially recognized as the sweetest in the world? Guimaras, an island province not far from Boracay, is celebrated globally for its mangoes, with trees so prized that even export bans protect their genetic purity.

In 2025, Philippine mangoes made history when a shipment from Pangasinan landed in Rome, Italy—the first commercial export to the country. Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. called it proof that “Filipino products can meet global standards when public and private sectors work together.”

Mango Mama transforms this national treasure into a tropical treat with plant-based mango coco ice cream, salted coconut cream from freshly squeezed coconuts, mango slices with warm suman made from two heirloom rice varieties, black rice ice cream, and crunchy latik, resulting in a dance of contrasts: warm and cold, creamy and crunchy, sweet and salty.

Ube: Purple Gold of the Philippines 🌸

Philippine ube or purple yam is as Instagrammable as it is delicious, and it has become a global sensation in recent years. But beyond its color and flavor, it carries deep cultural roots.

Ube Mama layers scoops of plant-based ube and maja blanca ice cream with house-made ube pudding and chewy palitaw, crispy cornflakes and a drizzle of salted coconut



cream. The ube is sourced directly from Aeta farmers in Pampanga and Zambales, supporting indigenous farming communities.

Sticky rice & pinipig 🍚

Coco Mama and Mango Mama spotlight Philippine rice traditions with heirloom sticky rice from the Banaue terraces and toasted pinipig from Laguna. These additions not only add layers of flavor and texture but also honor centuries of farming heritage and support local cooperatives.

Heirloom rice from Banaue, cultivated on the ancient rice terraces, is a living heritage. Buying directly from cooperatives ensures that farming families continue this tradition.

More than just dessert ✨

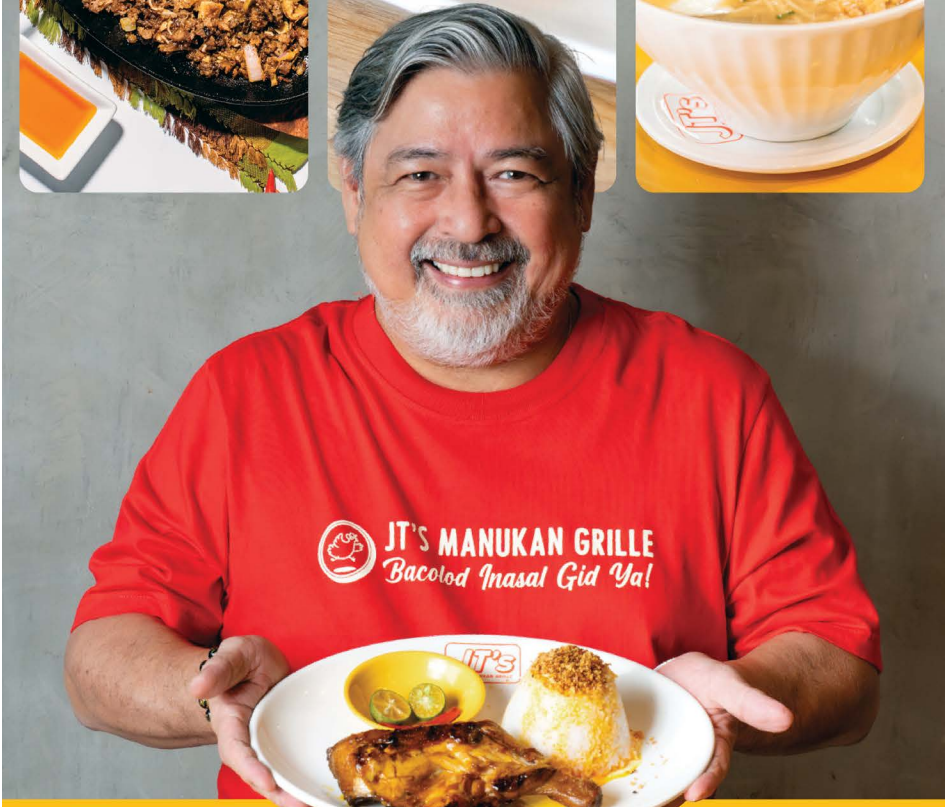
The “Mamas” are plant-based, vegan-friendly, and served in eco-friendly packaging, down to their biodegradable spoons. But what makes them truly special is how they connect every bite to Filipino identity.

From the tree of life to the world’s sweetest mangoes, to ube grown by indigenous farmers, each dessert represents a conscious effort towards upholding sustainability, and a story of resilience and pride.

Coco Mama opened in Boracay in 2016, reached La Union in 2018, and has added Ube Mama, Mango Mama and the latest addition, Berry Mama in Baguio City, known for their strawberries.

So what are you waiting for? Indulge in a Mama. It’s not just a dessert, it’s a celebration of the Philippines, in every spoonful. Do it for your country! 🌿

Coco Mama: D’Mall Avenue and Seaworthy, Station 1
Ube Mama: D’Mall market
Mango Mama: D’Mall Plaza behind the Ferris wheel





Branches:
Manoc Manoc: Tindahan it Boracay on Tuluhan Road
Bulabog: Road 1A

Website: jtsmanukangrille.com
FB: JT's Manukan Grille Boracay
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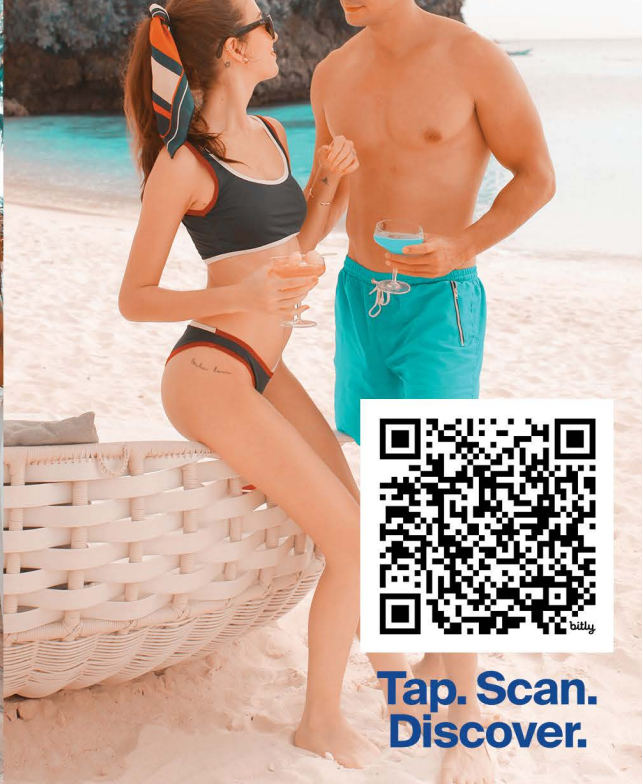
UNIVERSAL EYE CHECK OPTICAL speedo FOOD HALL AL-NOORANI Babu house Denim-Hub EDO PARADISE

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ISLAND LEARNING ACADEMY

Where Passion Meets Possibility

BY PAULINE REITZER



The main classroom is one of five, with board and lodging in three apartments offering 12 bedrooms for about 22 students.



Boracay has long been celebrated for its beaches, kitesurfing scene and vibrant tourism. Soon, the island will add a new dimension to its reputation: a hub for world-class learning and creativity.

The Island Learning Academy (ILA), set to open in Bulabog soon, merges education, wellness and tourism into one dynamic concept.

The academy is led by business partners Normeth Preglo and Patrick Thonpson, who share a vision of positioning Boracay not just as a vacation spot, but as a place to stay, grow and learn. Normeth, with

her extensive background in hospitality and wellness, oversees operations, while Patrick, a former UAE school director now a homeschool educator, provides academic expertise. Bryan Moran, a Berklee College of Music-trained musician, heads the music and creative programs, ensuring the arts sit alongside academics, AI and wellness in ILA's multidisciplinary model.

"We saw world-class talent across the island and wanted a single hub where residents and visitors could learn, train and create," says Normeth.

The academy will offer six key verticals:

languages, academic boosters, applied-AI courses, wellness and sport coaching, and creative workshops in music, photography and DJing. This mix reflects what the founders describe as a model of "learning tourism," where education complements island life.

"We want students to have a beach-to-classroom rhythm, learn a new skill, sip island coffee, and head back to the sand with both a certificate and a story," Normeth explains.

Target learners range from local students after school hours to expats and

digital nomads, as well as tourists seeking meaningful activities when the weather keeps them off the beach. Online learners abroad will also have access to ILA's programs, further positioning Boracay as an educational-tourism destination.

The campus will include a 10-bed apartment and five en suite rooms for "learn-and-stay" guests, with a rooftop sports deck. This accommodation is managed by Babos, ensuring reliability and a warm welcome. Facilities feature language pods, sports areas, a coffee bar and collaborative workspaces. "No other venue here merges all of these elements under one brand," says Normeth.

Community engagement will be a central pillar of ILA's work. Monthly drop-in afternoons will offer free English clinics and AI-assisted study sessions for local children from lower-income families. Discounted classes will also be provided for uniformed services, including police, immigration, DOT and LGU staff, while residents will be able to showcase their small businesses through pop-up stalls.

Local collaboration is equally important. The faculty already includes Boracay-based teachers, artists, musicians and coaches, ensuring that the academy's growth supports island talent. Scholarships and job pathways are also planned, with merit-based programs, free language courses for community frontliners, and partnerships with European firms to open doors for graduates abroad.

In the long-term, the partners envision Boracay as Southeast Asia's "learning island," hosting regional retreats and exporting their multidisciplinary model online. "This is about giving people the chance to learn something new, right here on Boracay, and carry it forward, whether into their careers, their communities, or simply their memories," says Normeth.

Facebook: /ILABoracay





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C5 Hama Japanese
C5 Hobbit Tavern
C5, C6 Island Chicken Inasal
C5 Jammers Beach Shack
C5 Jeepney Stop Boracay
C5, D3 JT's Manukan Grille
C5 Kelana
C5 Lemoni Cafe
C5, C6 Coco Mama
C5 Mango Mama
C5 Smooth Boracay - Cafe, Restaurant & Lounge
C5 Thai Basil
C6, D4 The Sunny Side Cafe
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