

SIARGAO

INTRODUCTION

A small teardrop-shaped island at the coast of the Philippine Deep, Siargao promises a surfing and beach drifting experience like no other as the country's surfing capital. Its paradise atmosphere sets it beyond standards of most loved beach destinations in the country and in Asia.

The crystal deep blue waters surrounding Siargao's different spectacular islands and islets are just emblems of much-desired peace and relaxation. It is a haven to all ocean lovers, tourists or vacationists. Its world-class waves that reach up to nine-feet high are just breathtaking and awesome to witness. Its sugar-fine white sands, natural lagoons, dive sites, water caves, stalagmites and stalactites, mangrove forests make this place a haven for the sea children and nature lovers. Its seas are teeming with a diverse kinds of marine species as evidence for nature's abundance in the place.

Situated 800 kilometers south of Manila, in the western part of the territory of Northern Mindanao's Surigao Del Norte, Siargao Island covers 48 little islands which are divided into nine municipalities: Burgos, Dapa, Del Carmen, Gen. Luna, Pilar, San Benito, San Isidro, Santa Monica, and Socorro. It covers roughly 437 square kilometers of land area with each having something exemplary to offer from one island to another. With approximately 200,000 inhabitants, Siargao has been preserved to its tourism-worth beauty to attract more surfers worldwide. Aside from copra farming and seaweed propagation, the hardworking people of Siargao rely mostly tourism as sources of income; so, rest assured, its splendor is well-maintained and well-loved by the people.

Feel the call of the ocean and wallow into the feeling of self-freedom by watching the lovely horizon from sunrise to sunset in this surfing paradise.

Best Time To Visit

As Siargao is famous and best at its surfing features, save your July to November for a vacation in its islands for the height of the surfing season. During these months, surfing waves from the depth of the Pacific come alive and give its audience an awesome and enjoyable high altitude fit for your surfboards.

If you want to go island hopping and take a peek of the scenic views in different islands of Siargao, summer months (dry season) from March to May will give you the perfect weather condition for your activity.

Game fishers can have their time during August as it is the game fishing season of the year, not to mention, the provincial government initiates a game fishing competition during this month. So if you're ready for some action in your vacation, might as well join this competition for a remarkable experience you can capture through your camera and your memories and bring home.

In general, you can easily come back to Siargao anytime of the year you may want, as its beauty knows no season.

Highlights

Being the Surfing Capital of the Philippines and one of Asia's most sought-after destinations, Siargao boasts its pristine paradise-like white beaches incomparable to any other swimming capitals. Do island hopping to explore the captivating sites in its little neighboring islands, which are few minutes or hours away from each other. Have a glimpse of the crystal waters and let the cool breeze take you to each destination. Arrange a team of friends or family members and do an interesting work-out and bonding with beach volleyball.

Aside from its lounging coastline, it also brags about its well-preserved wetland of mangroves In Del Carmen, which is the largest in Mindanao. In the east, a number of virgin inland seas faces the Pacific Ocean and serve as source of livelihood for the area inhabitants. Kayak through the water-paved mangrove forests and be caught in awe.

Surfing and island hopping are not all in Siargao. You can also try game fishing in the islands of Gayum and Daku. Have an exhilarating riding-in-balance in a local '*habal-habal*' or '*iskaylab*,' a popular two-wheeled single motorcycle (motorbike) found in Mindanao which can carry five to six passengers. Enter the Sohoton Cave and marvel in the beauty that awaits you. Take a dive in its deep waters and swim with the stingless jellyfishes.

After a long day of excursion and swimming all over, you can relax and have a nice massage or organize a bonfire picnic with friends.

With all these waiting for you, pack your bags and get ready for an adventure-packed and excitement-filled escapade in Siargao's beaches. Indulge into a lot of fun, extraordinarily wet activities you can try in different islands. Plunge into the oceans, go island hopping and boating, experience romantic and beautiful sunsets, and discover a whole new water paradise for yourself.

Communication

Even when you're enjoying yourself in the water, you can still contact people back home through your mobile phone service provider. Smart/Talk N' Text works well in the areas although there are some islands which have bad signals. Landlines are also available for domestic and overseas communication.

Internet also works well so you can easily talk to your loved ones abroad through Skype chat, Yahoo messenger, or e-mail, or share the photos you just captured for the whole day through Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. Smart Bro works just right in Siargao as network signals.

Money

Being in the eastern part of Mindanao, Siargao is far from the country's capital. Thus, a bigger budget can get you going in Siargao without any shortage. A cash of Php5,000.00 to Php7,000.00 will let you explore Siargao and dig in the activities for three days and two nights, exclusive of air fare and transportation rentals if you'll have any. It includes surfing lessons for beginners. You can also check out the airlines for promo packages for lower air fare rates.

Although some resorts accept international credit cards, it's good to have enough cash on hand. Most prefer cash. There are rare, if there's any, ATMs in Siargao. Before going to the island, have your currency changed into Peso. There is a Western Union in Dapa Island in Siargao where you can send

and receive wire money transfers in Peso. If ever you run out of cash, you can go to Surigao City where you can find major banks and ATMs. It is a four-hour boat ride away from the island.

Commercial banks available are the following: United Coconut Planters Bank (UCPB), Land Bank of the Philippines, BDO, Allied Banking Corporation, Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC), Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company (Metrobank), Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI), Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), and Philippine National Bank. Surely, you can find assistance through these banks in case money withdrawal or transfers.

There are also courier and mailing services for wire money transfers: JRS Express, LBC Express, Fastpack Services, Pates Forwarding Services, Libcap Super Express, and Philippine Postal Corporation.

Immigration

If you're not feeling like going back to your country and wanting to stay for a longer period of time, you can check and inquire in Surigao's branch of Bureau of Immigration right at the provincial capital. It is located in Narciso Street, Surigao City, Surigao Del Norte. You can ask the process about visa extension through this branch. To get to Surigao City, ride a boat, a ferry, or fast craft which have daily schedules of sails.

ATTRACTIONS

Being nestled by the mighty waves of the world's largest body of water, the Pacific Ocean, Siargao is said to be the tropic's counterpart of Hawaii's renowned Oahu and Tahiti. Visiting Siargao is finding the perfect place for relaxation, for bonding, for adventure, for trying something new, and for discovering a whole lot of different things away from the urban life. This is also your chance to indulge with its rustic, untainted ambience, stay close to nature, and behold its finest creations.

Don't forget to bring your waterproof cameras so you can capture all these once-in-a-lifetime adventures. Get on your feet and see what you can do during your stay in Siargao to make it a grand experience to remember.

Surfing

For any tourist or visitor who come to the place, surfing is the first, if not the only, and premier goal he wants to achieve. This is the top daytime attraction that many Siargao newbies do when they step foot on the famous island. So, you've got to try it and conquer those big waves which will devour you up if you're not brave enough.

Surfing in Siargao is the latest sport and its waves are tourist attractions that will take you by storm. Being a tropical jewel of the south, check out the popular surfing sites in the area and go boarding:

- **Tuason Point:** Situated three kilometers north of General Luna, Tuason Point is the most famous surfing spot in the country. In this territory you will find world's famous **Cloud 9**. With its popular breaks and surfs, be cradled and amazed by its strong waves and have that unforgettable surfing euphoria you've been longing to experience. Having a hollow and heavy

right hand barrel, Cloud 9 boasts its superb reef break for professional surfers. Aside from Cloud 9, experience the powerful **Tuason left** for left hander. Its strong waves are about 400 kilometer south of Cloud 9 also meant for experienced surfers. If you're new in the sport, you can also slide on your boards through the **Cemetery**, a left hander that can be ridden by all surfers. You can also try the Tuesday Rock and Ventura.

- **North of Cloud 9:** Terrific breaks can also be experienced in other area aside from Tuason Point. **Stimpies** and **Pacifico** are great left-handers as well which have fat, hollow, and powerful waves. The **Rock Island**, on the other hand, is perfect for long rides having a 300-meter fast and flawless right hander. You may also go to **Burgos** and check out several lefts and rights waves.
- **General Luna and South:** Traversing to the east of GL is **Daku island**, offering exciting right handers breaking during large swells that are perfect for amateurs. Another fun surfing site with hollow right handers for professionals is the **Pansukian reef**. Sailing down south, you'll find the lovely islands of **La Janoza** and **Mamon** with perfect surfing waves too. The **Mabuntok Reef** of Mamon is one of those which cater to all types of surfers.

If you feel like showing off your surfing skills and leave everyone in awe, join competitions like the Siargao Girls International Surfing Fest which happens every summer. You can also join to the Siargao National Surfing Cup, Billabong Cloud 9 Invitational, and Siargao International Surfing Cup conducted September.

Surf's up in the surfing paradise of the Philippines!

Island Hopping and Awe-inspiring Tours

Take a break from the heat and the water and explore the magnificent Siargao through these exciting island hopping tours:

- **Mangrove Tour:** The largest mangrove reserves of the south is also present in Siargao. The whole island of Siargao consists of more than 8,000 mangrove forests and 4,200 of these big number can be found in the municipality Del Carmen. The town is nestling a number of rare and endangered flora and fauna species in marine, wetland, and terrestrial areas. The half-day mangrove tour starting from Del Carmen Tourism Center covers land and boat transfers, environmental fees, shed rentals and entrance fees, snacks and water, and an eco-adventure guide.
- **Countryside Tour:** A whole-day countryside tour will take you to the towns of Burgos, Dapa, Del Carmen, General Luna, Pilar, San Benito, San Isidro, and Santa Monica. Tour around these places and discover their history, products, and culture; and mingle with the Siargaonons and learn their vernacular. Visit Santa Monica's Danjug Cave and Tak-tak Falls, have lunch in Alegria Beach, and stop over the Pacifico Beach in San Isidro and Magpupungko of Pilar. Behold the Magpupungko rock formations and be caught in awe.
- **Lagoon Tour:** If you feel like taking a peek to inland seas that will captivate your eyes, book a half-day lagoon tour in Del Carmen. Get the chance to enjoy the soothing view in Sugba Lagoon, located in Barangay Caub. Paddle across the mangroves and relax in its serenity of the wild.
- **Sohoton Tour:** Spending the whole day just touring around Sohoton Cave will be so worth it. Located in the municipality of Socorro, more popular for Bucas Grande Island, the Sohoton

Cave offers its lagoons and stingless jellyfishes which will accompany your swimming experience. Explore its vast biodiversity and love the interaction with these jellyfishes. Take some photos with these harmless species.

Sight-seeing and Other Activities

You may not always go surfing when you're in Siargao. Being a nature's haven, there are a lot of fun and adventurous activities during your stay. Siargao also offers pristine and serene white beaches perfect for diving and sports activities like swimming and beach volleyball.

For beach lovers, get ready for sun-kissed skin as you feel the heat while plunging into the waters. Enjoy the relaxing laid-back atmosphere in a quiet beach experience in **Pacifico Beach** and wait for the astonishing sunset while taking a walk along the shores and feeling the sugary-fine sands.

Be amazed with the elegance of the **Magpungko Beach** in the town of Pilar and have a glimpse of its majestic limestone and granite sculptures. Its shores unveil pools of various shapes and sizes of limestones similar to basins, barrels, tubs, and ponds especially during low tide.

Explore the neighboring **Daku, Guyam, and Naked islets** and go swimming in its cool waters. You can also do snorkeling, diving, and game fishing. You can also learn surfing lessons in Daku Island for Php500.00 per hour. Dive into the turquoise clear waters of the Naked (**Pansukian**) Island and feel the massive coral reefs below your feet. Go spelunking to the luminescent **Silop Cave** or the labyrinth tunnels of **Mapawa**.

Uncover marine life as you feel close to the biodiversity of Siargao.

EATING AND DRINKING

Satisfy your palate with the most delicious seafood cuisine in Siargao. Have a delectable taste of the edible marine species from the vast biodiversity of the island.

Most resorts, hotels, and lodging houses include food and dining in their rates. But if you're having a hungry appetite for different authentic tastes, delight with the island's variety of restaurants. Here are some of the restaurants you can dry digging in:

- **Ocean 101 Resto:** just 500 meters away from Cloud 9; serves both local and international foods with value accommodations. Their fish burger or chicken mango curry and banana shake are must-tries. Also get some cocktails and party and drink all night.
- **Dajon Restaurant Bar and Grill:** said to be Siargao's finest restaurant as they serve Filipino and Western cuisine at reasonable rates; plus, a live band will entertain you all night. The restaurant is located in General Luna.
- **Honey Breeze:** a one-of-a-kind seafood restaurant with an overlooking view of the surf spots; have a try of their sandwiches, shakes, salads, and barbecue anytime of the day, plus a wide array of many other dishes to choose from.
- **Kabibo Cafe Bar & Resto:** located at the La Luna island Resort between General Luna and Cloud 9; offers a wide variety of drinks and meals fairly priced and deliciously prepared

- **Lalay's:** serves authentic Filipino food and some drinks for bottoms up.
- **Maridyl's:** near Lalay's; also serves delightful seafoods and some beer for an all-night party
- **Nine Bar:** tropical beach bar for surfers, backpackers, hippies, beach bums, and even artists; keep upbeat like the music, eat delicious meals, take a sip on their house specialty shakes, and have some gut-kicking alcohol mixes
- **Ronaldo's Inn & Resto Bar:** offers affordable sumptuously cooked meals
- **Ruth's:** also located in General Luna, serves delicious chicken and pork barbecue.
- **The Pub:** near Cloud 9 in General Luna; serves the best prawns and fish steaks in the place at really affordable prices and great music

If you feel like having party-all-night scenes, stay in General Luna and enter the local bars for non-stop rocking and dancing. Some recommended bars you can check are: 5 Lyns Cafe, El Nino Loco, San Miguel Beach Bar, Seven Eleven, and Tattoo Disco. Be prepared for your sweaty grooves and the dance the night away.

GETTING THERE

The magnificence of Siargao is perfectly accessible through flying, driving or riding a land transportation, or sailing. You can choose among these which you think is most comfortable and affordable, at the same time, for you. Also, you should consider weather conditions when choosing the mode of transportation you will go on board to reach the island.

By Air

You can fly your way to Siargao through Cebu Pacific which have weekly flights on an M-W-F (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) schedule. You'll go straight to Sayak Airport in Del Carmen, Siargao. There are also connecting flights from Manila to Cebu to Surigao City. Zest Air also flies from Manila to Surigao Airport. Airphil Express and Philippine Airlines have direct flights to Surigao City while SeaAir has direct flights to Mactan-Cebu to Sayak Airport in Del Carmen every Tuesdays and Saturdays.

Alternate routes can be Manila to Butuan City, Agusan Del Norte then take a ferry to Surigao City.

From Surigao City, you will take a fastcraft or ferry for a four-hour sail to the town of Dapa in Siargao island. You can catch this ferry ride at 11:30AM at the Eva Macapagal Passenger Terminal, which is just 20 minutes away from the airport. The ferry ride costs Php200.00.

By Land

Siargao is also accessible through bus or any land vehicle. There are bus lines in Pasay City that have trips to Surigao City, although not daily but several times a week. The bus just have get to a ferry to be transported to Surigao City. Then, from Surigao City you can take the ferry to Dapa, Siargao, the jump-off point to the island. Land transportation lines you may want to check depending on your preferred drop-off are the ff:

- Manila to Surigao City: Philtranco Bus
- Dapa to General Luna/Burgos: van/motorbike/jeepney

- Sayak (Airport) to General Luna: van/motorbike/jeepney
- Butuan City to Surigao City: private van/bus/jeepney

By Sea

There are also passenger boats from Cebu City to Surigao which are available daily. It's advisable to book your ferry as early as you book your flight. Ferry lines you may book ahead of time depending on destinations you want to reach are the ff:

- Manila to Surigao City: 2Go
- Manila to Cebu City: 2Go, Sulpicio Lines, Inc.
- Cebu City to Surigao City: 2Go, Cokaliong
- Cebu City to Butuan City: SuperFerry
- Surigao City to Dapa: Britphil Express, Dapa Express, Fastcraft Aska, Fortune Jet, Fortune Angel, RORO Montenegro
- Surigao City to Del Carmen: Britphil, Fastcraft Aska, Fortune Jet
- Dapa to General Luna/Burgos: Britphil, Fastcraft Aska, Fortune Jet

LOCAL TRANSPORTATIONS

On your first day in Siargao, exploring the islands and familiarizing yourself with them may be the first activity that will enter your mind. Local transportations are affordable and accessible enough to have you getting around the places either by land or by sea. For non-surfers, getting around Siargao will still be an exciting activity with the local transportations available.

'Habal-habal' or **'iskaylab'** (motorbike) is the the exciting alternative when getting around the islands of Siargao and exploring their promise the Surigaonon way. It is modified motorcycle that can carry roughly more than two persons. For as low as Php100.00 depending upon your destination, it is the usual mode of transportation popular in Mindanao aside from jeepneys and tricycles around.

The *habal-habal* comes in two forms. It's simpler form is the ordinary motorcycle with seat extension cantilevering over the back wheel. This seat can accommodate three passengers as the driver balances moves forward to the gas tank and balances the motorcycle. A smaller person can still sit on the side of the gas tank, in front of the driver. The complex form of *habal-habal* can accommodate up to 13 persons at the same time with their baggages like groceries and farm animals on strategic placements. Its extensions are wooden planks attached across the back seat of the motorcycle which form the seats for the passengers.

The sight of *habal-habal* is already a spectacle itself. Riding it is indeed adventurous especially if it will be your first time. You can also rent a *habal-habal* for a whole day expedition for Php500.00 or depending upon your destinations and haggling skills with the owner/driver.

Aside from the *habal-habal*, local transportations include **jeepneys** which can transport you within the island, from one town to another with starting fare rate of Php8.00 per person. **Ferries** are also available if you want to go island hopping or if you need to go from one municipality to another. Fare rates start at Php70.00, depending upon the distance and the ferry company you're going on board. There are also public and private **vans** which can transport you around the town, to the market, to the

resorts, or to the seaside.

WHERE TO STAY

For a comfortable yet inexpensive vacation that feels like home, Siargao offers a lot of choices for accommodation. Resorts and hotels can be found in every town, especially in General Luna, the southeast tip of the island and the prime destination for amateur and professional surfers.

Check out these highly recommended abodes for your Siargao adventures:

- **Bamboo Garden:** located in Pacifico, San Isidro, Siargao and boasts its hidden paradise ambience. Its cozy bamboo huts are seated between palm trees facing the beach for a soothing view of the great waves of the Pacific Ocean. Feel the serenity in this undisturbed hospitality-driven place for reasonable rates.
- **Bayud Beach Resort:** a Filipino-Mediterranean inspired sanctuary for tourists located in General Luna. It offers pool and beach facilities for the water lovers, high-class and spacious suites, nightly entertainment, and fine dining. You can even book the resort for your wedding, anniversaries, parties, or honeymoons. Visit them at www.bayudbeachresort.com.
- **Buddha's Surf Resort:** at the heart of Siargao Surf community, between Cloud 9 and the town proper of General Luna. Its contemporary-designed accommodations offers a relaxing atmosphere after a day of surfing activities. It has a beach-view restaurant catering Thai cuisine.
- **Cherinicole Beach Resort:** located in Pisangan, General Luna. It offers air-conditioned room accommodations with dining. Among its amenities are the fresh water swimming pool, pacific Ocean-view beach front, a beach resto bar, and a coffee shop. Check out their rates at www.cherinicoleresort.com.
- **Island Dream Pal Paradise Resort:** located in Catangan, General Luna and offers modern yet traditionally-inspired tropical villas remotely nestled in the lush green garden. It houses a stunning lagoon-shaped pool, a restaurant featuring Filipino and international cuisine, a lounge bar, and reflexology spots. It also offers free WiFi, flat screen TV with satellite digital connection, and even has an electric generator for power back up. Visit their website at www.islanddreamsiargao.com.
- **Kermit Surf and Dive EcoCamp:** a European-style chill out, cozy, and affordable resort. It only has four spacious rooms and two cottages, each with private terrace, which give a high sense of privacy to its dwellers. It has a fully equipped surf camp perfect for beginners who are learning to surf.
- **Pansukian Tropical Resort:** offers Asian-inspired cottages and villas with outstanding amenities for surfing, snorkeling, scuba diving, kayaking, and game fishing. Their dining and relaxation areas are superb making it a highly recommended accommodation in General Luna. Check it out at www.pansukian.com.

CLIMATE

Having surrounded by bodies of water, Siargao and the entire province of Surigao Del Norte falls under Philippines' climate type II where there are no pronounced dry season even during summertime. However, it has very pronounced maximum rainfall period starting November to January and

sometimes extending to February.

It has a very cool weather with a temperature ranging as low as 21.1 degree Celsius during -ber months (September to December), the Philippines' Christmas season, the longest in the world.

When June strikes, the temperature can rise as high as 35.2 degrees Celsius, one of the hottest recorded temperature in the country.