

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

Located on the island of Panay in the Western Visayas, the province of Iloilo and its buzzy capital Iloilo City are linked by the Guimaras Strait to the independent island-province of Guimaras and to Negros Occidental, the northwestern half of the island of Negros. Negros Occidental's capital is Bacolod City.

As well as being a great base for exploring the natural attractions that dot the surrounding province of the same name, Iloilo City is one of the main access points for Boracay Island with its powdery white beaches.

GETTING TO AND AROUND

Iloilo has easy flight connections to Manila (75mins), Cebu (55mins), Hong Kong (2hrs 40mins) and Singapore (3hrs 35mins). Jeepneys, tricycles (motorised taxis) and buses are the most common ways of getting around the city and province as a whole.

Bacolod City is a 50min flight from Manila and a 30min flight from Cebu, or you can catch a ferry from Manila, taking 18hrs. There are also fast ferries to Bacolod from Iloilo City.

Jordan in Guimaras is 20-25mins from Ortiz Wharf in Iloilo City by pump boat, or there are local ferries from Parola Wharf in Iloilo City to Buenavista.

WHERE TO STAY

Most of Iloilo City's longer-established hotels are clustered in City Proper, but it is compact and uncongested enough for you to explore easily wherever you stay. Upmarket hotels are opening in Mandurriao's burgeoning business parks, while Jaro and La Paz are popular with budget travellers, and Molo and Villa Arevalo have larger beach resorts. Guimaras is also known for its relaxed beach resorts, as is Sibalay in Negros Occidental. Bacolod has plenty of good-value, comfortable accommodation around the cathedral, Public Plaza and general central area.

ILOILO & NEGROS OCCIDENTAL



CLIMATE

Tropical, with an average annual temperature of 27°C. February and August are the driest and wettest months respectively.

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MassKara Festival, Bacolod

IT'S MORE FUN IN THE PHILIPPINES

WELCOME TO ILOILO & NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

Dubbed the 'City of Love' for its friendly, gentle and soft-spoken inhabitants, Iloilo City is large but has a human face: its seven districts all have their own character thanks to colonial influences, and their own town centre with a plaza, Roman Catholic church and public market. Its newer business district Mandurriao has an array of dining and nightlife options, while Villa Arevalo has a beach vibe and lots of seafood restaurants.

The rest of the province is a mecca for outdoors activities, including hiking and diving. The island of Sicoon in the north, accessible by bus and then boat from Iloilo City, is being developed as an eco-destination. Iloilo City is also the access point to the beach paradise of Guimaras with its water sports and boat-hopping to outlying islands.

Relatively wealthy for its sugar production, Negros Occidental is a centre of arts and culture, with Silay City north of the capital of Bacolod City dubbed 'the Paris of Negros' for its heritage houses. But it has its own beautiful pristine beaches: the seaside city of Sipalay is seen by some as an alternative to Boracay and is renowned for its diving as well.

"Iloilo is a hidden gem, full of history and nature [and] a less-crowded alternative to a big city like Manila."

– National Geographic



Nelly Garden, Iloilo City
Francisco Guerrero



Fresh mangoes, Guimaras



Iloilo River, Iloilo City



The Ruins, Talisay City, Negros Occidental

WHY IT'S MORE FUN IN ILOILO & NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

There are plenty of opportunities for activity-packed day-trips and short breaks within Iloilo province: hiking in forests and to waterfalls, snorkelling or scuba-diving in the Kuliatan Marine Sanctuary, and sailing to caves and a saltwater lagoon. Guimaras is renowned for its water sports and island-hopping, while diving is a big draw of Sipalay in Negros Occidental.

CULTURE & FOOD

Dubbed the 'Province of Festivals', Iloilo has plenty to entertain, divert and educate, whether it be museums of local history or the lively bar

and nightlife scene. But it's Negros Occidental that is the region's true cultural highlight, with splendid architecture – including the Palacio Episcopal, San Sebastian Cathedral, the Capitol Building, and Spanish and other churches – plus steam locomotives bearing witness to the province's affluent golden age.

Eating here is a joy. Don't miss the local classics of *batchoy* (pork and noodle soup), *lechon manok* (chicken spit-roast over charcoal), *talaba* (oysters), *pancit molo* (pork wonton soup), *'Kadyos, Baboy, at Langka'* or KBL (pork, pigeon pea and jackfruit stew) and *laswa* (a clear vegetable soup). Then of course there are the sweet mangoes for which Guimaras is known.

TOP EVENTS & FESTIVALS

- **Dinagyang Festival, Iloilo City, January** – parades and street dances in honour of Santo Niño.
- **Panaad sa Negros Festival, Bacolod, April** – the 'Festival of Festivals', showcasing the region's history, arts and culture, tourism, trade, games and sports.
- **Pasundayag Festival, all towns in Iloilo province, April** – traditional dances, parades, singing and displays of tribal clothes.
- **Manggahan Festival (Mango Festival) Island, Guimaras, May** – a showcase of the famous food, with street dancing and dance and drama competitions
- **MassKara Festival, Bacolod, October** – one of the biggest festivals in the Philippines, with sporting events, music concerts, food festivals, garden shows, agriculture-trade fairs and more.
- **Haw-As Festival, Dumangas, Iloilo province, October** – a celebration of the local fishing industry, with performances and displays of the regional marine bounty including milkfish, crabs and tiger prawns.



The UNESCO World Heritage listed Miag-ao Church, Iloilo



Bucari pine forest, Leon, Iloilo



Dinagyang Festival, Iloilo



Tangke saltwater lagoon, Carles, Iloilo

TOP 10 ACTIVITIES

- Tour the UNESCO-listed **Miag-ao Church** in **Miag-ao** 45mins from **Iloilo City**.
- In Iloilo City, visit the **Museo Iloilo**, the **Nelly Garden** heritage mansion and **Jaro Cathedral**, and wander along the **Iloilo River Esplanade**.
- Venture to the pilgrimage, agricultural and leisure site of **Garin Farm** an hour from the city.
- Hike in **Bucari Pine Forest** in Leon and **Nadsadjan Falls** in Igaras, both 90mins from Iloilo City.
- Snorkel or scuba dive in the **Kuliatan Marine Sanctuary** with its gigantic rock formations, two hours from Iloilo City.
- From Iloilo City, sail to **Isla de Gigantes** to discover **Pawikan Cave** and the **Tangke saltwater lagoon**.
- Discover the water sports and beach paradise of Guimaras, then go island-hopping from **Guimaras** to **Inampulugan**, **Guiwanon**, **Panobolon**, **Natunga**, **Nadulao** and other surrounding islets; don't miss the fascinating **Igang Marine Station** of the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center.
- Discover the friendly, rapidly modernising Negros Occidental capital of **Bacolod**, voted among the best places to live in the Philippines, with a vibrant Art District, sporting scene and museums.
- Visit **Silay City**, nicknamed 'the Paris of Negros' for its 29 heritage houses including Balay Negrense.
- Dive to see whale sharks, turtles and other marine life at **Sipalay** and **Danjugan Island** for its protected reefs and rich marine life.