



Negros

Discover





Welcome, Mabuhay!

Majestic volcanic landscapes, tropical mountain rainforests, magical coastal regions, species-rich diving grounds, and an abundance of sugar cane – that is Negros! The island belongs to the West Visayas region and is divided into two provinces. Negros Occidental covers the northwest and Negros Oriental the southeast of the island. Negros has the largest sugar cane cultivation areas on the Philippines and is one of the world's largest sugar producers, which has earned it the nickname of "Sugar Island". In the north of the island in particular, you find large plantations on which the coveted plants from the sweet grass family thrive magnificently. The modern production plants and historic sugar mills of the old colonial cities of Bacolod, Silay and Victorias give you a rare glimpse into the sweet world of sugar crystals.

The wild and romantic volcanic and mountainous region in the north of Negros provides a stunning contrast to the cultivated landscapes. Hot springs, thermal pools, waterfalls and lagoons line the trails to the craters' edges of mighty volcanoes. The Tablas Plateau in the south offers natural attractions, including the famous Twin Lakes and the Casaroro Falls. Even the coastal regions offer untamed beauty. Above all, the palm-fringed white beaches on the southern West Coast and the secluded coves in the southeast of Negros offer everything that make a beach holiday on a tropical island unforgettable.

Negros is also famous for its vivid underwater world, whose rich marine life reminds many divers of overcrowded aquariums. The most popular and most beautiful areas are to be found in the southeast and east of the island: mainly off the friendly coastal town of Dauin, around Apo Island, Siquijor Island and Sipaway Island.



Negros Oriental

Dumaguete City

The charming university town of Dumaguete is situated on the southeastern coast of the island and is the provincial capital of Negros Oriental. Lush green areas, stately mansions reminiscent of Spanish colonial times and a bell tower adorn the town. The impressive university building and the old Catholic cathedral at the entrance of the city gardens are also well worth a visit. The attractive beachfront promenade, the "Rizal Boulevard", runs directly along the coast. The cafés nestled amongst acacia and palm trees provide perfect places to relax and listen to the sound of the sea.

Malatapay Market

Every Wednesday, vibrant market stalls with fresh vegetables, exotic herbs, luscious mangos and papayas, roast pig and grilled fish lure locals and visitors alike to the Malatapay Market in Maluay. It is one of the finest markets in the Philippines and is situated just 30 km south of Dumaguete.

Dauin

The clean, golden-brown beaches of Dauin, one of the oldest communities in the province, are highly recommended and also have something quite special to offer besides beautiful resorts for divers and beach lovers: hot springs! Mineral-rich water bubbles on the water's surface near the beach. You can also witness this volcanic phenomenon underwater. Dauin lies just 15 kilometres south of Dumaguete and is where many divers begin their excursions into the extremely species-rich underwater world just off the coast.

Bais

Roughly 50 km north east of Dumaguete, whales and dolphins often cavort in the Tañon Strait between Negros and Cebu. The small town of Bais on the east coast of Negros Oriental is a popular starting point for tours to watch these fascinating marine mammals.

Excursions to the surrounding area

The Tablas Plateau, whose highest mountain is the 1864 meter-high Cuernos de Negros, stretches out behind Dumaguete. The region has an incredible abundance of different species and is a true paradise for nature lovers. The lakes, rivers and primary mountain rainforests are inhabited by countless endemic and extremely rare species of animals, including Prince Alfred's deer and the bleeding-heart pigeon – a species of bird that rarely leaves the ground despite its ability to fly.

Twin Lakes

At about 900 m above sea level, roughly 25 km northwest of Dumaguete, lie the twin blue-green crater lakes, Lake Balinsasayo and Lake Danao, surrounded by a virgin rainforest. The dreamlike view is spectacular, wild and yet harmonious. In the jungle, paths lead you past secret waterfalls and hot springs, which bear testament to the geothermal activity in the region.

Casaroro Falls

9 km west of Dumaguete, a 350-step climb leads you to the Casaroro Falls, one of Negros's most stunning and most photographed waterfall. The tight, rocky riverbed leading to the mouth makes the waterfall unusually narrow. The water plunges 30 m into a pool that has formed at the foot of the extremely steep wall. Surrounded by precipices covered in lush vegetation, you can bathe in the refreshing water and enjoy picnics.

The Palinpinon Geothermal Power Plants

The Earth's core is inconceivably hot and, by human standards, holds an inexhaustible energy supply – if you know how to use it. The Philippines is the world's second largest geothermal power generating country. Two of the numerous geothermal power plants in the country are situated in Valencia, 21 km south west of Dumaguete. Here, steam brings the geothermal energy to the Earth's surface. This is really worth a visit!





Diving paradise off Negros

The waters off the Southeast Coast of Negros have long since ceased to be an insider tip for divers. In particular, the amazing underwater world off Dauin, Siquijor Island and Apo Island are world-famous for the abundance of species and diverse coral landscape found there. Even highly experienced divers are certain to discover many new creatures in the marine protected areas.

Dive sites off Dauin

Dauin is a superb starting point for diving excursions, as most dive sites are easily accessible and are not more than a few minutes away from the coast by boat. One of Visayas oldest marine sanctuaries is Masaplod North. The striking reef harbours an incredible variety of species with large shoals of fish, snappers, groupers, grunts, great barracudas, stargazers, cowfish, stingrays, sea turtles and giant scorpion fish. The large Dauin Marine Sanctuary is particularly appealing with its abundant coral gardens that extend into extremely shallow waters, thus making it attractive to snorkelers too.

Diving around Siquijor Island

Siquijor lies to the east of Negros Oriental and is easily accessible with the high-speed ferry from Dumaguete. Many resorts also organise crossings to the island. The island is still largely unknown to holidaymakers and is therefore a real insider tip for people looking for peace and relaxation. It also offers divers varied and extremely vivid underwater landscapes. One of these is the Paliton Wall, a wall that descends 40 metres and is covered in black corals, sea fan and soft corals.

Star in the underwater cosmos:

Apo Island

Since the 1970s, the waters around the small and hilly Apo Island have been protected and are closely watched by the Silliman University in Dumaguete. Snorkelers and divers find such a diverse and breathtakingly stunning underwater world around Apo Island that many refer to this area as one of the country's diving highlights. The island is surrounded by fantastic, abundant coral reefs. "Clown Fish City" is home to an entire shoal of anemone fish.







Negros Occidental

Bacolod

Bacolod is the capital city of the Negros Occidental province. It is regarded as the "Sugar Capital" of the Philippines because here a great deal revolves around the cultivation and processing of sugar cane. The city is also proud to have been bestowed with the nickname of "City of Smiles". The reason for this soon becomes apparent to all visitors: The Bacoleños receive all foreigners to their city openly and warm-heartedly. Tourists also feel exceptionally comfortable here, for Bacolod is the country's cleanest and greenest city. The Negros Museum is an interesting place to visit with exhibitions on the history of the sugar industry, on rural life in the province and steam locomotives, which have a particular significance on the island. The Biodiversity Conservation Center is also well worth a visit, where dedicated conservationists work to preserve endangered and indigenous species.

Maskara Festival

A thousand smiles per minute – that is the motto of the elaborate Maskara Festival, which is held over several days in October each year in Bacolod. The festival is the largest and most spectacular event of the island of Negros and features a wide range of musical and cultural events. Splendid processions and parades take centre stage in which the inhabitants, clothed in colourful and intricate masks and costumes, attract curious onlookers from all over the world. The festival also features street dances, the sale of local handicrafts and a competition to choose the best mask of the festival.

The steam locomotives of Silay

Silay lies 15 km north of Bacolod and has lots to offer from a cultural perspective. Old rail enthusiasts will be particularly enthralled. Outside the city gates is one of the largest sugar cane plantations in Negros, which is criss-crossed by a 180 km long railway network. Besides modern trains, steam locomotives nearly 100 years old are also used at harvest time. You can visit these by special arrangement with the Tourist Office. The city is also adorned with countless old ancestral, historically preserved, grand houses. One of these is home to the Balay Negrense Museum, which very vividly showcases the daily life of Negros' upper class at the end of the 19th century. The San Diego Cathedral, built in 1925, is also a great attraction. With its silver, gleaming dome, which can be seen from afar, the cathedral is reminiscent of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Victorias Sugar Mills

All those who would like to know how the sweet juice of sugar cane from the plantation ends up in little packets in the shops and what this involves, should take a day trip to Victorias. The city is home to the largest sugar mill in the Philippines. During a visit to the mill, you can observe the various processes involved in the extraction of sugar crystals and learn all kinds of interesting facts about the world's most treasured luxury food. Furthermore, the 350 km long railway network – the longest of its kind in the Philippines – runs through the sugar cane plantations outside the town. Steam locomotives built between 1920 and 1930 are also used here.





Besides sugar cane plantations, Northern Negros is also characterised by a formidable mountainous landscape, where every now and then, the jagged craters of mighty volcanoes reach up to the sky. The region captivates hikers and nature lovers with its geothermal phenomena and trails through magical cloud forests and fascinating fauna.

Hiking on Mount Kanlaon

Mount Kanlaon, a 2465 meter-high volcano, is the centre of the National Park of the same name. The park protects various types of forest including primary mountain rainforests and cloud forests, which are the habitat of countless species of animals. Mount Kanlaon is the only active volcano remaining on the island. Several routes lead to the summit, where you can marvel not only at the main crater but also an old lateral crater and several mountain lakes. You must allow at least three days for the ascent. Once

there, you are rewarded with a spectacular view of the jungle, the sugar cane plains at the coast, the sea and the neighbouring islands of Cebu and Panay.

Mambucal

Mambucal is an unusual village at the foot of one of the slopes of the Kanlaon Volcano, about 30 km east of Bacolod. For most visitors, it is the starting point for mountain and jungle tours in the Mount Kanlaon National Park. The place itself also has plenty to offer. Hot sulphur springs, natural warm pools, waterfalls and beautiful lake scenery surrounded by subtropical vegetation make Mambucal extremely appealing. It is a perfect place to gather your strength before heading to the summit, or to rest after an exhilarating hike. Here, you can also observe rare fruit bats and other species of bats. You often see the bats hanging upside down from the trees in groups.



San Carlos

The small, friendly town of San Carlos lies on the Northern East Coast and belongs to Negros Occidental. San Carlos is famous for its annual Pintaflares Festival. The highlight of the festival is an exuberant street dance competition in which groups of dancers from various parts of the town compete against one another wearing colourful costumes. A worthwhile excursion in the surrounding area is to the "Chocolate Hills" of Negros, a hilly landscape similar to the one on Bohol, but a little smaller.

Sipaway Island

Sipaway is a charming, small tropical island, which can be reached in 15 minutes by an outrigger boat from San Carlos. The island has rainforest and mangrove forest in which over 30 species of birds have been identified up until now. Sipaway's diving grounds are no less spectacular than those off the South Coast. On the house reef and ledge off the coast directly in front of the island, you can observe numerous sea slugs, moray eels, stonefish, octopuses, groupers, sea snakes, garden eels and many more sea dwellers. To the north of Sipaway and further beyond, you also come across stingrays, large puffer fish, ghost pipefish, barracudas, horse mackerel, tuna and groupers on beautiful coral gardens, reef flats, mazelike rock formations, steep faces and sand banks.

Idyllic beaches at Sipalay

Sipaway or Sipalay? It's easy to get confused. However, Sipalay is not Sipaway's sister island, but is instead a pretty village on the Southern West Coast of Negros Occidental. You should definitely allow for a longer stay in the region, for example, as part of a trip around the island, as the most beautiful beaches of Negros can be found to the north and south of Sipalay. Romantic small coves, pristine white sandy beaches, excellent snorkelling and diving opportunities close to the shore and tranquil waterfalls in the surrounding area make this section of coast a highlight of any Negros trip.



Travel Tips

Arrivals

Negros is easily accessible by plane and boat. You can fly to the airports of Dumaguete and Bacolod from Manila and Cebu City. There are also flights from Davao to Bacolod. High-speed ferries connect Negros with Luzon, Bohol, Cebu, Guimaras, Mindanao, Panay and Siquijor Island. Ferries operate daily, for example, between Dumaguete and Cebu City and between Dumaguete and Tagbilaran on Bohol. Bacolod is also connected in this way to the provincial capitals of neighbouring islands.

Climate

The climate on Negros is comparable to that on Cebu. There are no wet and dry seasons as such, which makes Negros and Siquijor an attractive holiday destination the whole year round. Temperatures range between 23°C and 33°C, whereby the cooler temperatures are mostly measured in January and the hottest days are in May.

Accommodation

On the coast of the island, you find extremely beautiful hotels and beach resorts with natural gardens, stylish pool complexes, restaurants and beach bars. Some of these have specialised in diving holidays, renting out equipment and offering courses. The accommodation on the smaller, offshore islands is characterised by a particularly high relaxation and tranquillity factor. In the cities and in the mountains, you find a whole range of overnight accommodation from very simple, low-priced guesthouses to first-class resorts. In the case of guided walking tours in the summit regions of the Mount Kanlaon National Park lasting several days, overnight accommodation is in tents – this has to be the most exciting way of spending the night on Negros.

Getting about

The road network is good and public transport, such as small buses, jeepneys, tricycles and taxis can be found almost everywhere. Those who wish you can rent a car to enable themselves to explore the island at their leisure.



