



Mabuhay

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The Award Winners Issue

BORACAY

**Now The World's
Best Island**

& 3RD BEST PARTY SPOT

**THE ISLAND'S
WINNERS**

**Discovery Shores,
Shangri-La, Mandala**

TIME TO PARTY: Hot & New Spots in Manila + Hong Kong • Singapore • Macau

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Vol. 34, No. 12, December 2012



Brazilian model Luana keeps in step with a school marching band along the glorious main beach of Boracay Island. Photo by Erwin Lim

THE WINNING CIRCLE

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We, at Philippine Airlines, are happy to have you on board. Please sit back and relax, and allow us to make your flight enjoyable. For your own safety and convenience, please observe the regulations listed on the back pages. "Mabuhay" is a Filipino verb in the form of a command: "Live!" It is also a wish: "May you live!" Whoever says it wishes you the great gift of a long and full life. It is both a blessing and a lusty cheer. "Mabuhay" (ma-boo-high) is such a large word that it lends itself to a wide number of secondary uses: Welcome, Congratulations, Thanks, Godspeed, Hello, Good Luck, Cheers, Posit, Sante, Viva, Kambei, Aloha, and many other expressions of goodwill. All these are a part of life, but it is the gift of life that makes them possible. "Mabuhay," in other words, is an invocation and a celebration of life itself.



ON THE COVER

BORACAY

Bask in the posh attractions of the world's No. 1 island and beach destination, and discover why thousands of tourists troop to this island all-year round. The photo shows a dinner set-up at the private beach of Shangri-La's Boracay Resorts and Spa.

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ONE ISLAND, SEVEN DESTINATIONS: Dinner in Italy then breakfast in Phuket? You bet. Seven hospitality villages at the Balesin Island Club offer amenities ranging from rooftop whirlpools in Mykonos Village to garden cabanas in Phuket Village. Here, stilt villas at the Bali Village above the tranquil Lamon Bay. Photo by Matthew Acred.

BALESIN ISLAND'S PARADISE: THE FAMILY SECRET IS OUT

An island paradise off the coast of Quezon Province gets a makeover—from private family getaway to exclusive high-end retreat. **LORI BLACKBURN** writes.

Fancy a private island shared with only a select few? Just a 25-minute plane ride from Manila takes you to the Balesin Island Club. Accessing this exclusive destination means you must either be a member or score an invite from one, but the perks are worth it.

Aside from 7.3 kilometers of powdery, white-sand beaches, seven international beach destinations are represented throughout the island. Think villas set amid the rice terraces of a Balinese village, sipping sangria at a Spanish-style café in Costa del Sol, or a speedboat ride to Balesin's own French Riviera for crêpes.

Balesin was originally owned by the Tordesillas family, who has been coming here since Edgardo “Ed” Tordesillas bought it in the 1960s. Back then, the runway was still a grassy airstrip and the accommodation comprised basic beach huts. Ed dreamed of creating a high-end island retreat that works with Balesin's natural resources. Years ago, he

even planted mahogany trees to create wind barriers.

These days, Ed's son, Roque (who climbed the island's banyan trees as a kid), returns with his own family, and after years as a rustic retreat, Balesin has gotten a first-class makeover. When Ed passed away a few years ago, the Tordesillas sold Balesin to luxury property developer Alphaland, owned by Ed's friend and fellow Balesin islander, Roberto “Bobby” Ongpin, who shared his vision for the island. Alphaland brought in Eco Plan of Florida, topnotch ecological designers, to balance luxury and sustainability.

Now, Ed's mahogany trees still stand majestically, and aside from a Club House (complete with four oceanfront swimming pools), there are seven hospitality villages with complete facilities, chic and intimate lounges, and restaurants. The final three villages—St. Tropez, Costa de Sol, and Toscana—will be completed by the first quarter of 2013.

Except for onsite ecofriendly transportation, cars



FILIPINO SHOWCASE

The Balesin Village showcases Filipino culture with its native cottages and furniture, local flavors at Sala restaurant, and tribal artwork by resident carvers from the Ifugao Province.

DOPPELGÄNGERS: (BELOW) The Mykonos Village calls to mind the picturesque island of Mykonos, one of the world's best-known islands. (RIGHT) The Bali Warung captures the flavors of Bali with Indonesian food and decorative pieces sourced from the island.



Photo by Bubuy Balangue



FAMILY FUN: Activities range from archery lessons at the state-of-the-art Sports Center, to wellness in Zen-inspired spa suites, to horseback riding on the beach.

aren't allowed on the island, so explore by horseback, mountain bike, or even *calesa*—a small Spanish-style horse carriage. Electric golf carts zip down jungle paths that weave around trees rather than cutting through them. Here, design flows with nature. To preserve Balesin, only 50 out of 500 hectares will be developed while 80% of coral reefs and rainforests are protected. Organic gardens and aquaculture farms (which raise marine life such as lobsters, mussels, and groupers) provide seasonal produce.

So what sets Balesin apart from other island resorts? Roque explains: "Very few island resorts have their own private airport and can match Balesin's class and standard. Imagine, soon a member shall be able to board a flight in Hong Kong, land in Balesin, and literally walk off the plane to Balesin's pristine beach." This, together with natural and developed beauty and spectacular villages, come together for what Roque calls the "Balesin Experience." "There is nothing like it in the world," he says.

Balesin has something for everyone. Roque's favorite activities include afternoon sailing on a Hobie Cat followed by sunset cocktails at Bali Village's "floating" Nusa Dua Bar. Phuket Village, which was called "Tordi (Tordesillas) Point" for many years, is also a favorite. His wife Maritoni, a former



professional ballerina, loves staying at the Balinese water villas which hover above the sea.

"This is where special memories are shared," Maritoni says. "Seeing our kids enjoy the island today as much as they did back when it was not developed only shows that Alphaland is on the right track." Their son, 14-year-old Emilio, likes eating at the Club House restaurant. He'd be most excited to show his friends the equestrian and paintball centers. His 8-year-old sister Tessa enjoys the swimming pools at the Phuket Village where white-sand beaches stretch into a cerulean sea.

Membership limits occupancy to maintain a balance between human development and nature, while guaranteeing a high standard of service and giving members a sense of belonging and home.

It also gets you 14 complimentary nights a year. Getting there is a breeze since Balesin's new runway accommodates international flights, private jets, and the island's own nine-seater Cessna Grand Caravan planes. Those arriving on the Cessnas can enjoy appetizing service at a luxurious private hangar in Manila with complimentary refreshments.

Balesin's unique experiences leave lasting impressions. As Roque remarks: "One thing I can guarantee is leaving will be difficult and the yearning to return will always be there. I know because that's how it's been for me practically all my life. I too have my own unique 'Balesin Experience'—but that's for another interview."

Interested? Log on to www.balesin.com. ■

INDULGENCE: With 7.3 kilometers of powdery white-sand beaches, Balesin invites you to play. Scuba diving, snorkeling, wake boarding, and kitesurfing are all available. So are long walks on the beach. Photo by Bubuy Balangue.



Illustration by Ruth Rivera



Presidential Namesake

Quezon Province, where Balesin Island is located, was named after the second president of the Philippines, Manuel L. Quezon, who was born in Aurora, then a part of the province.



LOCO OVER COCO: Quezon Province is also known for its *lambanog*, potent liquor made from the fermented sap of coconut flowers.