



mabuhay

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Bohol's Island Bliss

Where Nature Meets Culture

**In Too Deep
With Whale
Sharks**

**Quezon's Balesin
Island &
Unknown Spots**

**Sleepless
in Saigon**

**A Matinee
in Macau**

**Unique Water
Sports**

**Singapore's
Heritage Hotels**

PLUS:

Zamboanga's Sibugay • Santacruzán & Flores de Mayo Festivals

Contents

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During low tide in Bohol's Virgin Island, a sandbar appears and local vendors such as this woman take advantage by selling sweet native snacks like banana cue. Photo by Rommel Bundalian

46 | Bohol's Classics & New Fantasies

A growing hub of exciting eco-adventure tours

TRIPPING

42 | A Matinee in Macau

A city of dreams, beyond chips and slot machines

62 | Zamboanga Sibugay, at the Crossroads

This southern sea "pearl" shines once more

BEYOND TRAVEL

58 | In Too Deep with Whale Sharks

'Meet and greet' (the proper way) the deep's gentle creatures

36 | Two Hotels and a Rock Concert

Singapore's heritage hotels give new meaning to the word swanky

70 | Quezon's Hidden Frontier

A relaxing trairpse around nature's sylvan paradise

72 | Balesin: Fulfilling Fantasies

Posh travel dreams come true in this classy, exclusive island resort

68 | "Flores de Maria" and "Santacruzán": The Real Score

Learn the ABCs of these popular Philippine maytime festivals

82 | Rico Hizon: From Local to Global

Know what makes this Filipino BBC news anchor tick

SUMMER TREATS

40 | In Search of the Singapore Sling

A "tipsy-turvy" quest for the real McCoy

76 | Not Your Usual Water Sports

Bored with so-so summer activities? Try these offbeat ideas.



SECTIONS

06 | Editor's Note

12 | What's Up

14 | Travel Log

86 | The Lighter Side

90 | Last Frame

91 | PAL Pages

ON THE COVER

Bohol

The once sleepy island province is now waking up to its full potential especially as a rich cultural and eco-adventure travel destination. Photo by Rommel Bundalian.



Whale sharks make a splash in Bohol. Photo by Tommy Schultz



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.



LUSH PARADISE: The waters around Balesin Island is teeming with fish species including wrasse, grouper, flame colored snapper, yellowfin tuna, squid, parrot fish, as well as blue and black marlin.

BALESIN ISLAND: BEYOND LUXURY

LYNETTE LEE CORPORAL samples “luxurious eco-conscious living” in beguiling Balesin Island.
Photos by **GEORGE TAPAN**

To see the world in a grain of sand is literally impossible, but to live in six of the world’s well-loved destinations in a 500-hectare of land is every traveler’s dream come true... and it’s real. It’s here. Now.

A mere 25-minute plane ride from Manila is Balesin Island, found off the coast of Mauban, Quezon, which faces the Pacific Ocean. It’s impossible not to feel like royalty upon alighting the resort’s new Cessna Caravan that effortlessly taxis down the 1,520-meter long world-class concrete airstrip. Once you get past the fragrant lei, the welcome drink, and a serenade, you will know first-hand the wonderful things that make for a luxurious summer hideaway. Pristine emerald waters... long stretches of fine, white sand... exclusive 5-star resort amenities. Check. Check. Check!

But the best part of it all? Why, it’s experiencing the world’s best destinations in a matter of minutes and you don’t even need a passport and visa at that. Thanks to the vision of the island’s resort developers—seasoned travelers all who know exactly how to travel in stylish luxury and comfort—the island showcases deluxe “villages” that exude ‘rich and famous’ (paparazzis not included): the Greek island



PERSONAL SPACE:

Designers have thoughtfully separated wash basins for males and females in the villas’ bathrooms, as well as provided more clothes’ racks and pegs for the latter’s more diverse fashion sense.

of Mykonos; the chi-chi French Riviera’s St. Tropez; Sardinia’s affluent Costa Esmeralda; Indonesian favorite Bali; the exotic Thai destination of Phuket; and, of course, local pride Balesin. Given the developers’ classy taste, there’s no doubt they can pull this off and deliver what they promised.

According to Balesin project director Marco Diaz, the themed villages are not “mere copies” but are uniquely and “meticulously designed and constructed to resemble the selected destinations.” The best way to do this was for Balesin developer, Alphaland, to send its architects to the actual places to really get the feel of these destinations that are posh stomping grounds of the ultra-rich jet-set crowd. Thus, architects Meloy Casas and Jorge Yulo, for instance, had their immersion in St. Tropez, and Costa Esmeralda and Mykonos, respectively, all for the sake of authenticity.

Whether it’s the whitewashed structures of Mykonos atop a hill, the Mediterranean charm of St. Tropez or the wide-open spaces of Bali huts, resort members will get to fulfill their resort fantasies in this island. And hey, the food in these villas is authentic too.

The common denominator of these uniquely designed villas is its luxurious amenities. So, expect a 5-star feel to each village, Jacuzzis, indoor and outdoor opulent beds, plus modern comforts – WiFi access, direct to home TV (CIGNAL TV), and Smart 3G cell site.

Beyond the obvious, it’s the oft taken for granted details that make the Balesin island experience a memorable one. If you’re a pillow junkie, fret not for the pillows in these villas are snugly, softly divine.



EASY RIDE: The horse-riding trail around the island is 8.6 km long, 650-700 meters of which are on the beach.

Sunset cocktails? The beachside bar is there at your service. In the mood for silent moments? Sit under the lone tree in front of the Balesin village restaurant and contemplate Balesin's "sea of tranquility" to your heart's content. Need to pacify the restless tot? Go horseback riding with the little one on the beach. Father and son bonding has never been such a blissful activity.

Apart from the villas' spacious indoor shower areas, there are also al fresco shower rooms that offer utmost privacy. Massage treatments – either inside the room or outside on the day bed – are also available. Of course, Balesin has its own spa villa, as well as sports amenities exclusive for members.

The affluent, eco-conscious traveler will be glad to know that Balesin is an epitome of sustainability, what with water recycling capabilities, sewage treatment plants and probiotic fishponds, to name some. Cars are not allowed so you go from one village to the other via



LIVING IN STYLE: Balesin, located 35 kilometers off Mauban's coast, has 7.6 kilometers of white-sand beaches. The members-only island resort has 240 hospitality and 12 clubhouse suites available for members.

a golf cart. As part of their sustainability philosophy – the heart and soul of Balesin – Alphaland is only going to develop 10% of the island, and even that 10% will accommodate trees and lush landscapes.

The resort, says Alphaland SVP for corporate communications Michelle Ongpin, employs local villagers and has already sent three college scholars to date.

Whether you're reflecting upon the beauty of Balesin Island Club's 700-m long immaculately clean beachfront or relaxing in the villas' outdoor Jacuzzi, it's always a relief to know that living in the lap of luxury need not result in environmental carnage.

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