

## **Travel information about Eastern Samar**

*Note: We have tried to make the information as accurate as possible. However, we accept no responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person using this information.*

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### **About Eastern Samar**

Eastern Samar is one of three provinces on Samar Island, the second largest island in the Visayas, the region between Luzon Island to the north and Mindanao Island to the south. It stretches from north to south from Arteche to Guiuan, along the southern coast from the Pacific Ocean to Lawaan, in the center from Taft to Bagacay. The provincial capital is Borongan with a population of about 55,000 people. Other important towns are, among others, Oras, Dolores, Taft, Llorente and Guiuan. The local inhabitants call themselves Waray and speak a dialect which is called Waray - Waray, considered one of the major dialects used in the Philippines.

### **Climate**

Eastern Samar has a different climate than the rest of the Philippines. Eastern Samar, being located on the Pacific Ocean experiences greater rainfall throughout the year without the hot, dry season from March to May like most of the Philippines. Most of the rainfall occurs from November to February. There is no real dry season, the best sunny weather found from April to July but almost daily includes some rain so be prepared.

### **Going there**

A trip to Eastern Samar usually will start in Borongan, the provincial capital of the province.

#### **Bus from Manila:**

Various bus companies like Philtranco and Eagle Star provide both air-conditioned and ordinary buses from Manila, using the Philippine National Highway, directly to Borongan, Oras and Guiuan. The P 1150+ bus fare (ordinary, aircon P 1400+) includes the ticket for the ferry from Luzon to Samar. The trip takes over 24 hours, depending on the transfer time at the ferry.

#### **Bus from Leyte:**

From the new Tacloban Bus Terminal there are large buses departing every one or two hours to Borongan (P 150) . The trip takes about 5+ hours with some buses continuing to Guiuan. Even though these bigger buses take longer going via Buray/Wright in Western Samar they are the best choice if you are traveling with a lot of luggage. There are also air-conditioned mini buses which stop along the way dropping off passengers where they want departing in the morning about 4:30 a.m. up until afternoon.

The mini buses (P 180) are faster using the road along Samar's southern coast via Lawaan taking about 4 hours. You will not find these mini buses at the main bus terminal in Tacloban but at various different places like gasoline stations so be sure to ask some local people where you can catch them. Duptours has it's own terminal.

From the new terminal in Tacloban there are also medium sized ordinary buses going to Guiuan via Lawaan.

#### **By plane:**

The nearest airport is in Tacloban City on the island of Leyte. There are flights from Manila to Tacloban (Philippine Airlines or Cebu Pacific) and from Cebu City to Tacloban (PAL Express/Air

Philippines or Cebu Pacific). From the airport take a jeepney to town. The one waiting next to the arrival area are more expensive, if you just leave the arrival area and take one outside (just 30 meters walking) you can take one for the regular fare (P 12,--). From Tacloban downtown continue by bus or van as explained above.

### **By boat:**

Travelling by sea to Eastern Samar is via Cebu City. Superferry is serving the route Manila - Cebu City. From Cebu City you can take either Cebu Ferries or the Supercat to Ormoc, from there on to Tacloban and Borongan.

### **Getting around, accomodation**

From Borongan it is quite easy to reach any town along the coast, there are either buses or jeepneys. Only a trip to Arteche could be a bit difficult since the road from Oras northwards is not finished yet. All buses and jeepneys leave from the market in Borongan. Only the very early buses leave from the "highway" in front of the church. It is recommended to leave quite early as the numbers of jeepneys leaving Borongan are going down sharply later in the day. If you intend to go back to Borongan at the same day make sure you ask about the last trip back to Borongan.

Going inland is more difficult, some towns and villages can only be reached by boat like Maslog and

Jipapad. It also requires an adventurous spirit and a willingness to improvise, if needed. Short distances are done by multicabs (tiny pick-up busses like the indonesian bemos) and tricycles. Tricycles and multicabs have always a flat fare per person, depending on the distance. Tricycles in Borongan cost P 7 per trip and person, regardless of distance. If you are not sure about the fare ask other passengers before agreeing to "special trip" fare which is often overpriced.

### **Destinations:**

Around Borongan: Sulat, San Julian and Maydolong can be reached by multicab or jeepney. You will be faster with the multicab.

The beaches of Cabong (P 10) und Lalawigan (P 12) can easily be reached by tricycle. They leave from the crossing at the "Bishops Palace".

### **North of Borongan**

**Arteche and San Policarpo:** Take a bus or jeepney to Oras (about 2 1/2 hrs, P 100). From here you probably need to hire a motorbike, they take usually two passengers, sometimes even three. There might be also a jeepney from Oras, but don't count on it. There is one direct bus from Borongan to Arteche and one to San Policarpo leaving in the morning. Departure times may differ, so ask around a day before. From Arteche you could proceed to Northern Samars town Lapinig by bangka or by motorbike (P 100, Rough road).

**Oras, Dolores, Can Avid, Taft:** There are quite a lot of busses to Oras (2 1/2 hours, P 100), Dolores (2 hours, P 80), Can Avid (1 1/2 hours) and Taft (1 hour, P 50). The last trip directly to Oras leaves around 2 PM to 3 PM, the same applies for the trip back to Borongan.

**Going inland north of Taft:** The following places you can only reach by boat. Jipapad can be reached from Oras, boats to Maslog go from Dolores and to Can Ilay you can go from Can Avid. The boats always leave from the jetty next to the market.

## South of Borongan

**Guiuan, Salcedo:** Jeepneys leave from the market in Borongan (2 1/2 to 3 1/2 hours). The last trip back to Borongan is about 2 PM. The fare for going to Guiuan is about P 100.

**Balangiga:** The best way is to take a jeepney to Guiuan, get off at the junction near Quinapundan and wait for a jeepney or bus from Guiuan to Tacloban (or Basey). The trip can take some time, depending on the waiting time at Quinapundan it can take up to 5 hours. If you intend to go back to Borongan at the same day, make sure to arrive at the junction (Quinapundan) not later than 2 PM. If you miss the last jeepney to Borongan, you might have a hard time to get back to Borongan, passing minibusses (coming from Tacloban) are mostly full.

**Gen. Mac Arthur, Hernani, Llorente:** Take any Guiuan - bound jeepney, there are also some jeepneys going only as far as Gen. Mac Arthur (2 1/2 hours), Hernani (2 hours, P 60)) oder Llorente (1 1/2 hours, P 40). This jeepneys might also still run later in the afternoon.

## Accommodation, Food, Entertainment

Commercial accomodation is not plentiful in Eastern Samar. The best places you'll find in the bigger towns. Simple meals are available in Carenderias and Kitchenettes. Restaurants open and close, so it is difficult to recommend some.

### Borongan

Domsowir Hotel & Restaurant, Real Street (Tel. 055 - 2612133), in the center of town. They also serve quite good meals for reasonable prices. Rooms go for 175,-- up to 750,-- Peso.

Borongan Pensionne, National Highway (Tel. 055 - 2612109). P 200 up to 700.

Dona Vicente Hotel (Tel. 055 - 2613585/261), next to the "Uptown Mall" in Brgy. Songco. Rooms start at P 900 up to 3000.

Pebbles and Sand (Tel. 055 - 261-3533/ 560-9104), Brgy. Bato, cottages are available for about P 950.

Villa Brozas (Tel. 055 - 261-3419), Brgy. Bato, rooms start at P 1250,--

Bato Surf Camp (Tel. 09159913464 or 09294638791), Brgy. Bato, rates for cottages start at P 350.

Pirates Cove Surf and Beach Resort, located at Brgy. Rawis, rates start at P 1000.

There are some more places to stay but they are pretty basic.

### Divinubo Island

It is possible to stay overnight on Divinubo Island. There are two pleasant Cottages for rent (each P 700,--) mieten. As there are no restaurants or Carenderias on the island you need to organize your provision with the locals what actually is no problem. Contact Mr. Eddie Ang from "Borongan Glass": (055) 560 9433 or 09282834746. To get to Divinubo look here.

Opposite of the Domsowir Hotel is a small nightmarket, the shops sell mostly BBQ, they are not allowed to serve alcohol.

Along the "beachpromenade" (called Baybay) you can find some bars, quite a lot of them have Karaoke. Some are also "Girlie bars".

### Llorente

Rates for accomodation in Llorente are a bit unrealistic, however, there are so far two places to stay:

Blue Lagoon, (Tel. 09186275384)

9 km south of Llorente, in Brgy. Bacayawan lies the beautiful Bacayaw beach.

The Bacayaw Beach resort (Tel. 09287014351 & 09219967244) offers basic accomodation. There is no restaurant, but if ordered in advance, food could be arranged.

### **Gen. Mac Arthur**

A good place to stay in Mac Arthur is the friendly Dado Lodge, Tel. 0929374645. Nearby you can find another place called 4M Lodge, Tel. 09156215428.

### **Guiuan**

Guiuan Pensionne House, Lugay Street.

Khaishra Hotel, Lugay Street, Tel. 055 271 2376, Fax 055 271 2294.

The Tanghay View Lodge is a good place to stay, take a pedicab to get there (P 5). There is also a good restaurant with a nice view (Tel. 09176270226, Fax 055 - 582 0251, email: susan\_guiuan@yahoo.com.ph). They also offer Internet.

### **Calicoan Island**

There are already some expensive resorts at Calicoan Island.

### **Taft**

Crossroads Hotel, Taboc, Taft. This hotel is located at the junction going to Bagacay.

Eloisa Lodge.

Beach Resort Dankalan.

### **Other places**

In other places you might find simple lodging houses.

### **What to do**

(Note: For some trips we recommend to look for a guide who knows the area. As there are no professional guides we could help you finding somebody. Just send us an e-mail: info@easternsamar.de

### **Around Borongan**

Borongan has no special sights like ruins or alike but the town itself is a very pleasant place. The center lies around the church (even called "cathedral"). The place in front of church is a popular meeting point, in the early afternoon it is a nice place to sit under one of the trees to read the newspaper or just to watch the life around you.

Borongan has a beautiful beach, almost 2 km long which makes it special since few, if any, Philippine towns or cities have beaches within walking distance. This area is called "Baybay", which means beach. Along the beach stretches a kind of promenade, you can find a couple of simple bars and pubs, partly with karaoke. The Loom river is responsible for a strong current, so swimmers should be careful. Actually, the beach of Cabong is the better choice for swimming. Tricycles go there (see Getting around).

During the european winter there is some good surfing possible.

### **Hiking**

Anyone interested in trekking needs to be a bit adventurous minded and be able to organize trips on their own. There is very little organized tourism infrastructure so be prepared that the locals might find your idea quite funny to venture into the forests without real need to do so. Nobody here would walk somewhere if it is not absolutely necessary.

### **Pangi Falls**

A nice 3 hour trek brings you to the Pangi waterfall approximately 17 km west of Borongan. The first 10 km are done by tricycle to Barangay San Gabriel. From here you follow the river. To get to the waterfalls it will take you 2 – 3 hours, depending on your speed. You shouldn't do this trip in the rainy season as the waterlevel of the river might be too high. It makes sense to look for a guide but there are no professional ones so just ask the local people to find somebody who knows the area quite well, this should not be a problem. Try it in the Barangays San Jose or San Gabriel, 7 and 10 km inland from Borongan. Tricycles to these Barangays leave from Tarusan street in the center of Borongan (P15 – P 25).

### **Kaputian**

On the way to Pangi Falls you will pass the smaller but nice Kaputian Waterfall with its natural pool. It is popular with the locals from San Gabriel and San Jose.

### **Binalarawan Falls & Habag Falls**

To enjoy the beautiful Habag and Binalarawan falls, at least a two-day visit is recommended. Since there is no commercial accommodation available, you have to stay overnight in the forest, which certainly gives this trip a touch of adventure (just ask the friendly locals to arrange a simple shelter for you). Starting in Siha, a village about five km west of Borongan (take a tricycle from Tarusan Street), you will reach Binalarawan Falls after six to seven hours hike (including lunchbreak). Binalarawan is a small but beautiful waterfall with a natural pool surrounded by lush forest. The best place to spend the night can be found about one hour downstream, so leave no later than 4pm to be sure to reach the place in time before the sun sets. Proceed to Habag Falls the next morning. At first you have to go downstream for about an hour. When you meet another river you follow that one upstream for another hour to reach Habag Falls. Habag is bigger than Binalarawan and has a beautiful natural pool which is great fun for swimming. You could spend the night at the waterfall or walk back to Siha, which takes about four hours, and continue from there by tricycle to Borongan.

### **Minaligwan Falls**

Minaligwan Falls is a series of smaller waterfall. The first level can be reached in an hour from San Gabriel.

### **Amandaraga Waterfall**

Not far from the small town of Lawaan on the southern coast you can visit the beautiful Amandaraga Waterfall.

### **Tingson Waterfall**

It's an easy 45 minutes walk from Gen. Mac Arthur to reach the pleasant Tingson Waterfall. To find it it's the best to ask in the Dado Lodge for help.

### **Rivertrips**

Eastern Samar has some rivers, big enough to do a boat trip upstream. Some villages and small towns' only access is by taking a boat upstream. You could simply jump on one of the regular boats and go back and forth but it is recommended to hire a boat. The people are not used that somebody tries to rent their boats, so expect that they will not really have an idea how much to charge. A day trip on a boat for 5 - 6 passengers could be something about 1000,-- Peso.

The Suribao River is very beautiful and divides the Municipalities of Borongan and Maydolong. The boats going upstream leave from Brgy. Camada, close to the highway. Brgy. Camada belongs still to Borongan. Expect to get wet, as sometimes you will have to leave the boat if

the waterlevel at some of the rapids is low. The ride to the furthest Barangay of Pinanag – an takes about 2 – 3 hours. Not far from Brgy. Pinanag – an is the beautiful Mono Waterfall.

### **Islands off Borongan**

Just a 45 minutes ride from Borongan are Ando Island, Monbon Island and Divinubo Island. You can rent a boat in Brgy. Sabang, expect to pay about 600,-- Peso for the day. On Divinubo you can rent a boat from a young lady named Tanya Labong (cellphone 09398221186).

You can visit all three islands in one day. Regular boats to Ando leave from Brgy. Sabang and to Divinubo from either Brgy. Cabong or Lalawigan, depending on the tide. On Ando and Divinubo you can find some Sari Sari stores, however, it makes sense to bring food and drinks.

Ando Island has a small and friendly village, the white sand beach on the eastern side of the island is very beautiful and has a great view of the Pacific ocean.

Divinubo Island has crystal-clear waters, a white sand beach, a cave and swaying palm trees. There is a somehow damaged coral reef in front of the beach. A short walk brings you to an old lighthouse, another pleasant walk brings you to the beautiful pacific side of the island.

Monbon Island is a tiny island and lies in a marine sanctuary. On the island are some cottages, it is a good place to have lunch.

### **Islands off Taft**

From Taft you can organize a trip to a beautiful island called "Makate island". The island is surrounded by sandy beaches and mangroves. There are some shelters and a house where you can also spend the night. You need to bring food and water.

### **Beaches**

As there is plentiful of coastline you can find a lot of exiting beaches. The coast is very beautiful between the municipalities of Maydolong and Llorente. You can find a lot of great and rarely visited beaches. Especially worth visiting is Bacayaw Beach. Some more great beaches are located around Guiuan.

### **Surfing**

Surfing is becoming slowly popular in Eastern Samar. There are different spots along the Pacific coast. There is already a local "surf scene". Some local surfers maintain a website about surfing in Eastern Samar and offer surfing tours.

### **Safety**

Eastern Samar is quite safe, no difference to other areas in the Visayas. Tourists don't need to worry to get into any tourist trap like in Manila, Baguio or Cebu. Because of the small number of tourists visiting Eastern Samar there are few of the usual petty criminals and scam artists who trick and cheat tourists everywhere in the world. There is no special threat nor danger for foreign tourists travelling in Eastern Samar.

In remote Barangays always make sure to report to the Barangay captain.