

The UNESCO World Heritage
listed City of Vigan

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

The northern Luzon cities of **Laoag** and **Vigan** together with the remote archipelagic province of **Batanes** lie largely off-the-beaten track when it comes to international tourism. These destinations are mainly accessible by land travel on winding paved roads with picturesque views, specially in the mountain regions, or in the case of Batanes, by air.

GETTING TO AND AROUND

To get to the Ilocos Norte area, fly to Laoag from Manila in around 70mins. You can't fly from Laoag to Batanes, however flights from Manila to Basco on main Batan Island take around 1hr 20mins, or it's an hour's flight from Tuguegarao City in Cagayan. There are currently no boats to Batanes. The usual mode of transportation around Batan Island is tricycles, jeepneys, hired private vans, bikes/ mountain bikes or motorbikes, while boats and ferries operate to the smaller islands.

WHERE TO STAY

Accommodation on Batanes Islands is inexpensive and unpretentious. Most travellers stay in lodges, hotels, inns and homestays in Basco, the provincial capital. For a more upscale, unique hotel experience, stay at the art-gallery-style Fundacion Pacita.

Central Laoag and Vigan both have a good range of hotels, inns and private rental apartments for different budgets, and there are also beach resorts conveniently located in the city environs.

BATANES, LAOAG & VIGAN



CLIMATE

Tropical Northern Luzon has an average yearly temperature of 26°C without much variation either side; the coolest months are November to February. The rainiest month is August, the driest is April.

Regional Offices

- Department of Tourism, DOT 2/F NBC Building, National Highway, Barangay Catbangan, San Fernando City, La Union, Tel: +63 72 888 2098, dot1@tourism.gov.ph, dotregion1.mail@gmail.com
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BATANES LAOAG & VIGAN

Itbayat Island, Batanes



WELCOME TO BATANES, LAOAG & VIGAN

These volcanic islands and heritage cities in **Northern Luzon** are all the more worth exploring for their relatively under-the-radar nature. **The Batanes Islands**, accessible only by air from Manila and seasonally from Clark International Airport, radiate tranquil, unspoiled beauty and sustainability: think white-sand beaches overlooked by lighthouses against a backdrop of rolling hills.

Back on the mainland, **Laoag** and **Vigan** are both iconic cities in their own right. The capital of the province of Ilocos Norte, Laoag is a compelling ethnic and architectural mix including Spanish colonial buildings and baroque churches, while **UNESCO World Heritage site** City of Vigan also stands out for its beautifully preserved colonial and Asian architecture.

The white-sand beach resorts of **Pagudpud** are within easy reach, while the country's first National Park, **Hundred Islands**, is a day-trip/overnighter from here, as is surfing in **San Juan**, La Union.

"Find your own desert island. The Batanes Islands are way up north, closer to Taiwan than the rest of the Philippines, with 360-degree views of historic lighthouses and jagged cliffs that drop precipitously into the Pacific Ocean and South China Sea. Ride horses across rolling hills and eat seafood off banana leaves on a deserted beach."

– Condé Nast Traveller



La Paz sand dunes
Francisco Guerrero



Bangui Wind farm



Local regional dish pinakbet



Hundred Islands, Alaminos

WHY IT'S MORE FUN IN BATANES, LAOAG & VIGAN

Despite its rich history, **Northern Luzon** has plenty of scope for fun in the great outdoors, whether it's riding a 4x4 all-terrain vehicle (ATV) through the sand dunes, heading to one of the glorious white-sand beaches for some serious water-sports action, hiking or horse-riding. The **Batanes Islands** are particularly great when explored by pedal power; you can take your bike aboard local ferries for some independent, ad hoc island hopping fun.

A must for wildlife lovers is the protected **Hundred Islands National Park** a day-trip/overnighter distance to the south, in **Alaminos City**, Pangasinan. Formed of ancient coral reefs and home to an array of bird, mammal and marine life including Philippine ducks, thresher sharks, angelfish and ghost crabs, it's also another outstanding place for activities including kayaking, cliff jumping, zip-lining, wall climbing and rappelling.

CULTURE & FOOD

The region's historic highlight, **Vigan** on the west coast is renowned for the preserved Spanish colonial and Asian architecture that lines its Mestizo district with its cobbled streets, rustic mansions and cathedral. But Ilocos Norte's rich colonial and other history means that there are plenty of other sites to reward cultural explorers – among them, the **Juan Luna Shrine** in Badoc (now renamed by the Philippine Historical Commission the Museo ni Juan at Antonio Luna), the Ferdinand E. Marcos Presidential Center in Batac City, with a museum and cenotaph, the Malacañang of the North, a former Marcos residence and presidential museum in Paoay, and **Paoay Church** and **Santa Maria Church**, both **UNESCO World Heritage** listed.

The **Ilocos** region and **Northern Luzon** as a whole have strong culinary traditions that have become part of national cuisine, in the form of dishes such as *pinakbet* (vegetables cooked in a clay pot with fish sauce), *bagnet*, locally known as *chicharon* (deep-fried chunks of pork to be dipped in spicy or aromatic *sukang iloko* – sugarcane vinegar) and *empanada* (crispy rice flour turnover filled with eggs, Vigan *longganisa*, and vegetables). Vigan's Plaza Burgos is also one of the best places to come to have a leisurely stroll and sample some of the region's wonderful street food, accompanied by fountain-light shows.



Saud Beach, Pagudpud



The UNESCO World Heritage listed Paoay Church



Surfing, La Union

TOP 10 ACTIVITIES

- In **Batanes**, hire a bike to discover **Basco** lighthouse, trek in the **Naidi** and **Vayang** rolling hills, hike **Mount Iraya** and swim in the **Homoron Blue Lagoon Cave**.
- From **Batan Island** take a local *faluwa* boat ride to **Sabtang** or **Irbayat Island**; head for Sabtang's **Nakabuang ("White") Beach** with its famous rock arch or explore Irbayat's **Torongan Cave**.
- Wander or ride a horse-drawn cart around the cobbled colonial city of **Vigan** with its cathedral, fountain light shows and street-food stalls.
- Discover **Laoag Cathedral** and enjoy cultural immersion in traditional crafts such as pottery (*damili*) making, *abel* loom weaving, *basi* (sugar cane) wine-making and *sukang iloko* vinegar-making.
- Take a rollercoaster-style ride over the sand dunes of **La Paz** near **Laoag City** or for more of an adrenaline rush take a side trip and sprint to the sand dunes of Paoay.
- Admire grand **Paoay Church**: a fusion of local and baroque architecture.
- Enjoy water sports at **Pagudpud's Saud Beach**, the 'Boracay of the north', trek to its **Kabigan Falls** for a cooling dip and rise the zip-line across **Blue Lagoon** with a panoramic glide and land on the white beach, then go banana boating or jet skiing.
- Take a tricycle ride or hike to **Cape Bojeador Lighthouse**, an architectural wonder with breathtaking views of the surrounding area, then proceed to **Kapurpurawan** rock formation for a nature-inspired hike or horseback ride.
- Surf in **San Juan**, La Union, the surfing capital of Northern Philippines. The best season is October through to April.
- Take a boat ride for an island-hopping escapade around the geological wonders of **Governor Island**, **Quezon Island**, **Children's Island** and the rest of the 124 islands. The **Hundred Islands National Park** can be reached by a 9-hour bus ride from Vigan.

TOP EVENTS & FESTIVALS

- **Kannawidan Ylocos Festival, Vigan City, Jan** – a cultural celebration with traditional dress, marching band, folk dances and tribal rituals.
- **Guling-guling Festival of Paoay, Ilocos Norte, Feb** – a pre-Lent event introduced by Spanish monks in 16th century, with a dance parade.
- **Kurrapnit Festival, Pagudpud, Apr–May** – a celebration of a local species of bat.
- **Kangayedan Festival, Pagudpud, Apr** – a celebration of bountiful harvest, agro-tourism trade fair, sporting events and street dancing.
- **World Heritage Cities Solidarity Day Celebration and Cultural Festival, Vigan, Sept** – month-long festivity in solidarity with other World Heritage Cities around the world, forging cultural ties.
- **Damili Festival of San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte, Dec** – a celebration of the region's centuries-old earthenware industry.