



OBSESSED WITH PERFECTION: Literally no small pebble or sand is left unturned at Discovery Shores Boracay where a resort staff not only sand but also puts in the resort's logo. Such attention to detail makes Discovery Shores Boracay No. 5 in *Travel + Leisure's* Top 100 Hotels in

BORACAY WOWS THE WORLD

The world's best island and beach destination is now the toast of world travelers. Let **VALERIE CAULIN** tell you why. Photos by **ERWIN LIM**. Swimwear by CoKayne Clothing. Model's beach attire by Linea Italia. Model: Luana Caroline Reis

From the first European backpackers who stumbled upon its beauty way back in the 1970s to its undisputed status as the muse of the Philippine travel industry, Boracay continues to be a top destination choice of travelers worldwide. Not only is Boracay home to a 4-kilometer coastline of talcum-like sand and secluded coves and beaches, it has also become a hot party place, full moon or not.

Over the years, getting to Boracay has greatly improved. From small fishing boats that used to ferry passengers from Caticlan, a more efficient jetty port has been built to facilitate visitors' comings and goings. Roads were constructed for tricycles and resort shuttle vans. Lifeguards are now stationed along White Beach and a special Tourism Police Station is now fully operational.



Illustration by Kasey Albano

These are just a few of the hotels and resorts to stay in Boracay. The world-famous island has more to offer, with 141 hotels and resorts as well as 158 bars and restaurants.



Chosen by Travel + Leisure as the "World's Best Island; TripAdvisor as Asia's No. 1 Beach Destination. Travel + Leisure's total readership is 4.8 million monthly; TripAdvisor's website has 40 million monthly viewers.



If you don't have a handsome hunk to make your friends jealous, you can settle for a "stand-in".



NO PROBLEM! Forgot to bring your beach outfits to Boracay? No problem, for you can practically fly to Boracay on a whim with Philippine Airlines. Go to D'Mall and buy everything you need—from the essentials to flip-flops.

FOR EVERY TASTE

A no-fail destination even for the most discriminating traveler, Boracay beckons with award-winning hotels like **Tides Hotel** (www.tidesboracay.com), **Discovery Shores** (www.discoveryshoresboracay.com), and **Mandala Spa and Villas** (www.mandalaspa.com). When hotel brands like **Shangri-La's Boracay Resort & Spa** (www.shangrilaboracay.com) enter the scene, you know that you'll only have the best tropical island experience.

BUDGET-FRIENDLY BEACHES

Today, more and more people—especially the locals—can afford to enjoy Boracay. Indulge at **Nami Resort** (www.namiresort.com) or be at the beach via a 5-minute walk from **Alice in Wonderland Hotel** (Php1,500 and up during off-peak season). Go on island-hopping excursions on an outrigger canoe (Php2,500) or chartered yacht for a luxurious island exploration. Now how about flying over Boracay with **Boracay Helicopter Adventure** (+6336 288 4356)?

You can never go hungry in Boracay, an underrated food destination, with its plethora of dishes and cuisine from all over the world. D'Mall has many dining options at reasonable prices. Daily dinner buffet along White Beach pegged at Php250 attracts budget-conscious diners. Then there's **Restaurant Alchemy** (White Beach, +63917 3041570) for those looking for culinary adventures. For the frugal tourists, buy barbeque and packed rice for a satisfying meal in less than Php150.



LEARNING THE BASICS: Luana tries her hand at surfing at the Crown Regency.



SUCCESS: After many falls and bruises, Luana finally conquers the waves.



THUMBS UP: Tired but exhilarated because surfing is 90% paddling and 10% actual surfing.

AGELESS APPEAL

Young urban professionals are the island's solid patrons, but it actually has a very diverse crowd. A frequent visit to the island and you will realize that Boracay knows no age. Wake up in the morning and little children are shouting with glee as they try to run away from or toward the waves. The beach itself is a great venue for kids to enjoy the outdoors and nature. Services are also geared toward families like childcare services and glass-bottom boats. Even senior tourists find Boracay appealing.

ACTIVE OR LAIDBACK

Swim, sunbathe, hang out, dine, sign up for island tours, and people-watch. Want more? Try reef-walking, horseback riding, island-hopping, kite-boarding, cliff-jumping, skim-boarding, and windsurfing. For wellness, there are beachfront massages or spa treatments. Want to find your center? Yoga classes are offered by **Boracay Yoga** (www.boracayyoga.org).

At night, have a drink and dance at different pubs and clubs in the

island. Add some exotic flavor to your nightlife in Boracay with fun dancing performances.

RUSTIC ISLAND STYLE

Although modern-day resorts may have replaced the rustic island cottages, it doesn't mean that Boracay is devoid of serene spots. **Baling Hai Resort** (www.balinghai.com) is one of the few resorts that keep the island charm, from its TV-less villas to its well-hidden location. **Nigi Nigi Too** (www.niginigitoo.com) has garden villas made of local materials for that idyllic island-feel. Sail with a local sailboat known as *paraw* (Php500 for 45 minutes) and enjoy that cuppa at the legendary **Real Coffee and Tea House**. Hire a boat and drop by other beaches of the island like **Puka Beach** and **Diniwid Beach** to own the beach yourself.

From an island with no electricity and drinking water to offer its visitors in the 1970s, Boracay has come a long way. These days, it is hard to meet a local who has not heard of Boracay. With its award-winning titles and high-end facilities, it's no wonder Boracay still shines. ■



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