

JUNE-JULY 2009

Zest

The **ZestAir** inflight magazine

Marindague Feature:

- Untouched Nook
- Gasan's One and Only
- Rich Man's Playground

PLUS! 2 Event Calendars!

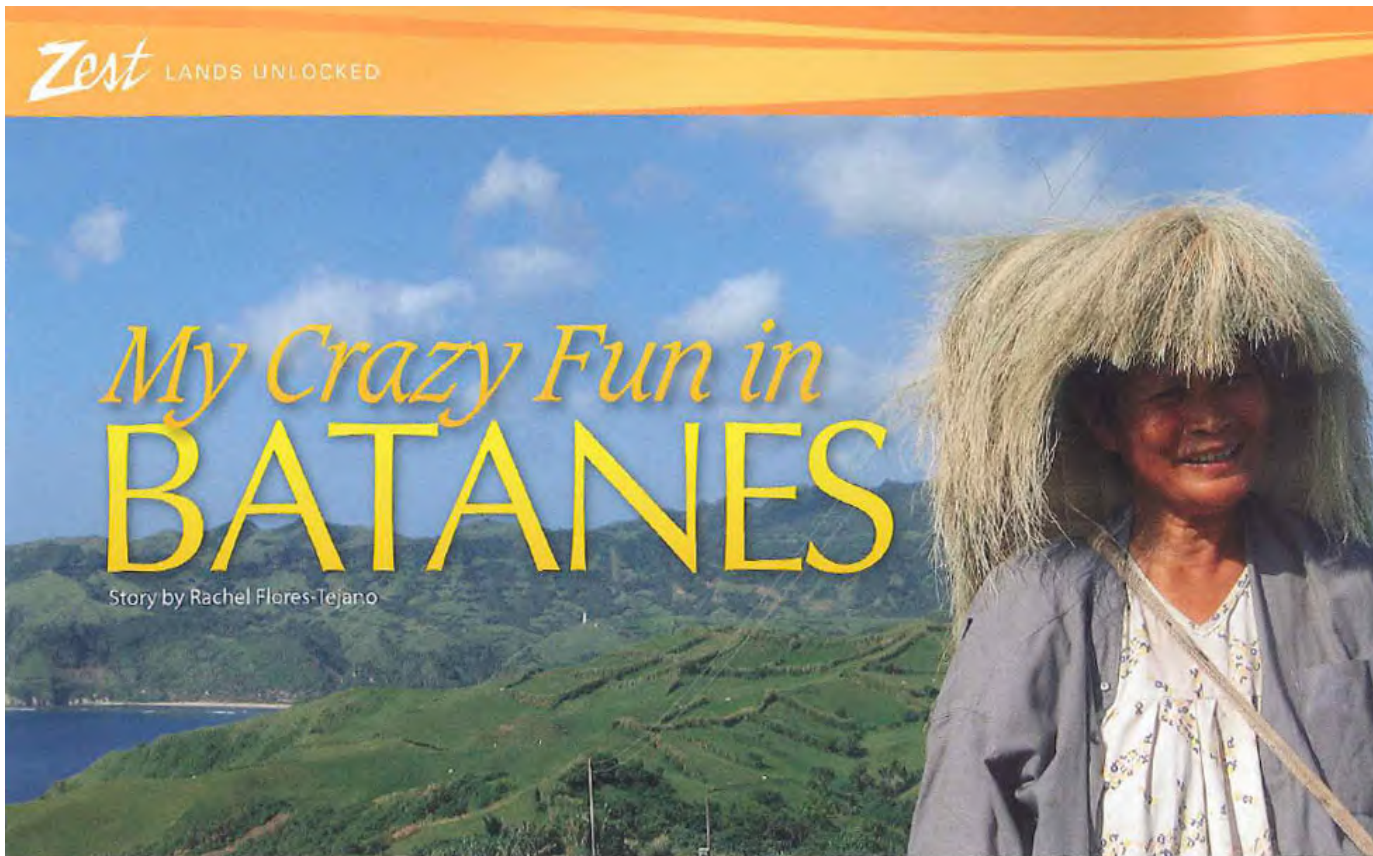
LAIIDBACK LANGKAWT'S LURE

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Scrumptious Shellfish
CamSur's World-Class Resort
A Truly Refreshing Experience

My Crazy Fun in BATANES

Story by Rachel Flores-Tejano



IT FELT LIKE A BLANK PAGE THAT NEEDED to be filled, a song in my heart that needed to be sung, and thanks to some foreigner-friends who are just ecstatic about our islands and culture, my fascination turned into a yearning for adventure. I wanted to taste the Philippine islands, starting with Batanes. In no time, I packed my gear and was off to have a grand time.

My mother is Ivatan. To this day, the most I had learned about my lineage is an ancestor's name – Chividin, a one-name wonder just like Madonna... cool! Would you believe that Mormons traced and kept our family tree in their archives? Anyway, from stories I gathered, the Batanes islands were stumbled upon by a diverse group of people at different points in history – from Vikings (Yes, Norsemen who sailed the seas in the 8th to the 10th century), Spanish, Dutch, Cubans, Americans, Japanese, etc. Somehow this explains the mix: Ivatans are mostly deep amber in color and have satin-smooth skin, taller than average, not flat-nosed, mostly chinky eyed (although some are deep-set) and conversant in English. As a kid, I often watched my mother dress up and thought her to be a goddess – she was beauty exemplified. I, on the other hand, got most of my looks from a father who is a true-blue city boy from San Juan





sizes are what make it interesting. Spot the famous Honesty Coffee Shop by a long road in Ivana. Beguiled tourists drop by just to see if they are honest enough to take something and pay without anyone around. This store has a karaoke box, souvenir items, beverages, snacks and coffee. Operating with less overhead expenses, it earns and serves as a conscience check at the same time. Brilliant! A 250 meter-long World War II Japanese tunnel has six rooms and a chamber you can reach by going down 32 slippery, uneven steps at a scarily steep angle of 45 degrees. Then there's Marlboro Country, an exhilarating expanse where carabaos and horses run

freely on cascading hills. Here, you can be a kid and become a superhero; run with your arms spread like wings. This is 360 degrees of scenic wonder! Then, be amazed with artworks of world-renowned artist Pacita Abad, our very own. Learn more about her and the art that put us on the map by visiting a popular landmark, the Fundacion de Pacita du Tukon.

If you still have time, I suggest you take matters into your own hands and simply walk about. Don't be afraid to take the unbeaten paths because the crime rate here is nil. Here are some ennui-killers: travel to the towns of Uyugan, Itbud, Ivana. Picnic in Mochong and check out

the deserted town of Song-song; go to a former base in Loran; go bowling and play billiards at a surprising recreation area by Mahatao beach; play basketball and tennis in Basco; engage in gin marathons with locals; chase giant lizards with children and hope hungry men out for pulutan don't get to them first; ride a corroded bike up and down the hills from quaint Ivana to lovely Loran; and, listen to amazing stories of *kamnans* and *marans* (terms of respect for old men and women) and roll their tobacco for them. I wrecked my uncle's brand new motorcycle (for the 2nd time!) when I crashed into a raging bull and a lamp post, respectively, both times almost breaking a few ribs. I've had a lot of crazy fun in Batanes but it'll have to wait until next time because the list just goes on and on... ZA



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