

REPORT

THE UNTOURIST GUIDES

Nothing against itineraries and pre-packaged tours, but how far can they take the unconventional travelers? We found a few less-than-conventional tours that can add that extra kick to your to-see checklists.

- ♥ How fit do I need to be?
- Ⓟ How much will I spend?
- 💡 How much will I learn?

Words Nina Unlay
Photography Fruhlein Econar

FOR THE HISTORY BUFFS

Manila Who

Where Are We Going

Escolta Street is one of the oldest in Manila, constructed in 1594, and now still relatively quietly tucked away in downtown Binondo. Aside from boasting a colorful history and well-preserved structures of neoclassical architecture, Escolta is home to quirky shops, a creative hub ideal for walking tourists and artists looking to fire up some inspiration.

What To Expect

Prepare to be transported to the 1600s. Manila Who is a mystery story disguised as a walking tour, sprinkled with trivia. The walking in itself is inconsequential—the real treat is the seamless integration between history and story. While the mysterious case of Rosa is fictional, there's plenty of opportunity to learn about the historic streets while making stopovers in infamous establishments.

GEAR UP

- Bottle of water
- Raincoat, in case of bad weather
- Camera
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Fan, to keep cool

WHAT YOU'LL SEE

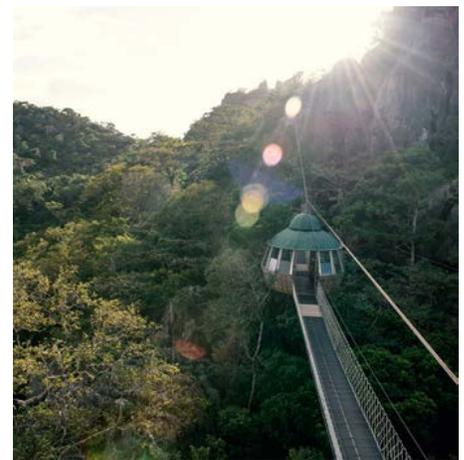
- Calvo Building
- Capitol Theater
- Plaza Sta. Cruz

HOW TO SIGN UP

One group consists of two to six participants. *Inquire at [FB.com/ManilaWho](https://www.facebook.com/ManilaWho).*

Rate: Php1,700 per person





Photography Mike Dee

FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL ENTHUSIASTS

Masungi Georeserve

Where Are We Going

A bounded, privately protected area made up of roughly 300 hectares of forested land, the Masungi Georeserve is one of the few places in the Philippines to find extensive amounts of karst formations—great for geology enthusiasts and for an unusual, breathtaking view. Private reserves in the Philippines are of less common territory, making the Masungi Georeserve in Baras, Rizal, a less than typical experience in a well-maintained conservation facility.

What To Expect

The Masungi Georeserve allows visitors, in groups of 6-10, to walk an eight to

ten kilometer long trek with numerous sites along the way, at their own leisure. Guided by a park ranger, the walk is highly educational, but it also asks a lot from its visitors—who must scale rope structures and walk through bridges, rock formations, caves. We would only recommend this trek for the decidedly interested; to find yourself bored on this trip would be both improbable and highly dangerous.

GEAR UP

- Water jug (water will be provided)
- Trekking shoes
- Face towel
- Jacket, in case it gets chilly

WHAT YOU'LL SEE

- Pinnacle karst formations, around 60 million years old

- Sapat: a human-sized spider's web, made of organic rope
- Duyan: a giant hammock that also serves as a bridge
- The rare, endangered Jade Vine

HOW TO SIGN UP

Masungi accepts sign ups from groups with 7 people and above. You are allowed to sign up with a smaller group, but the fee will still be for a group of 7. Masungigeoreserve.com

Rate: Php1,500 per person



FOR THE MERFOLK REEF NOMADS

Where Are We Going

Anilao, Batangas, is a hub for divers and snorkelers, boasting different dive sites like Fortune Island, Matabungkay and Balayan Bay. The area is located on the Verde Island Passage, part of the epicenter of marine biodiversity in the world, and is home to an award-winning Marine Protected Area.

What To Expect

This is not a tour to be taken lightly—freediving, also known as skin diving, is an activity that is learned with experts and best enjoyed out at sea. (Learn more about freediving on page 42.) What Reef Nomads does is put a group of adventurers out in the water with a couple of pro freedivers, giving them the introduction to this skill while experiencing the best possible view,

equipping them with all the necessary gear, people, and environment to take a close look at marine life.

GEAR UP

- Basic freediving gear, if you prefer to have your own: mask, snorkel, fins
- Plenty of swimwear
- Rashguard
- Dry bags
- Light snacks

WHAT YOU'LL SEE

- Twin Rocks Marine Sanctuary, the 3rd Best Marine Protected Area in the Philippines in 2011 among the 117 contenders nationwide
- Planet Dive Resort

HOW TO SIGN UP

The Introduction to Skin Diving daytrip

is for first-time skin divers. The package includes an introductory lecture, two shore dives, and a basic marine life course. They also provide transportation to and from Anilao, the resort entrance fee, and a buffet lunch. Equipment rental offered but not included. *Inquire at [FB.com/ReefNomads](https://www.facebook.com/ReefNomads).*

Rate: Php3,000



Photography Francisco Guerrero



FOR THE ISLANDERS
SURFISTA TRAVELS

Where Are We Going

White beaches, surf spots, and coconut trees—this collection of islands is better known as the “Surf Capital of the Philippines”, but anyone who’s ever been to Siargao will attest that it is so much more than that, even more than the infamous Cloud 9, a surfing wave reputed for the best tubes. There’s a reason why this tour package lasts six days; it isn’t going to be long enough. You might want to consider “beach bum” as your next occupation.

What To Expect

“The thing about surf travel is that the difference between a good surf trip and a great surf trip comes down to the company you keep,” says Surfista Travels founder Elaine Abonal, who plays mother hen to all the guests that make their way to join her trips. A certified instructor under the ISA (International Surfing Association), Elaine is there to make sure you get your money’s worth—both for your training and your vacation. Expect surf lessons daily, the time depending on the mood of the waves and weather, as well as random adventures to parts of Siargao like only the locals know how.

GEAR UP

- Proper sun protection
- Rashguard
- A sports camera for your underwater moments
- Dry bags

WHAT YOU’LL SEE

- Different surf spots around Siargao (you’ll have to go to earn the right to find out where they are!)
- Island hopping around Naked, Guyam, Dako Islands
- Magpupunko Rock Pools



Photography Sonny Thakur

- Kermit Resort, Kalinaw, Harana Resort, and other local dining favorites

HOW TO SIGN UP

Each package lasts 5 nights and 6 days, including surf lessons, gear and board rental, accommodations, photographs, airport transfers, and special goodies from sponsors. Airfare is not included.

Inquire at SurfistaTravels.com

Rate: Php30,000

